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MASTER EUSTACE

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By

HENRY JAMES

New York
THOMAS SELTZER
1920

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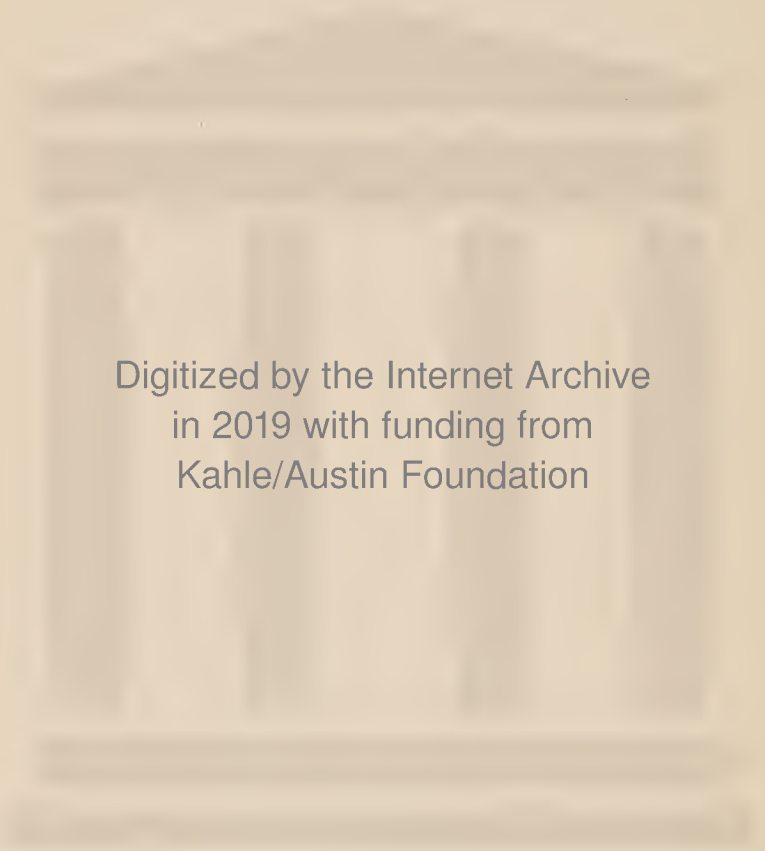

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PREFACE

The five stories in this volume, together with the four included in "A Landscape Painter," appeared originally in American periodicals, but for some unknown reason were never issued by Henry James in book form in this country. The present volume, along with "A Landscape Painter," makes accessible to the American public the nine short stories of Henry James which hitherto have been accessible only in English editions of his works.

I hardly need to emphasize the literary value of the stories in this volume—all of them written later than "A Landscape Painter." Both critics and public have expressed surprise at the amazing precocity of Henry James as shown in the tales of "A Landscape Painter," all of which were written before the author was twenty-five. The stories in the present collection are more mature in matter, yet they retain his earlier simplicity of style. Two of them were written when he was almost verging towards "the middle years."

"Longstaff's Marriage *(Scribner's Monthly,* August 1878) and "Benvolio" (*Galaxy,* August 1875) appeared in the "Madonna of the Future and Other Tales," published in London, 1879. "Benvolio" also appeared in the English edition of Henry James's "Collection of Novels and Tales" brought out in 1883. The other three tales in this volume, "Master Eustace" *(Galaxy,* November 1871), "Théodolinde" (*Lippincott's Magazine,* May 1878), and "A Light Man" *(Galaxy,* July 1869) appeared in "Stories Revived" issued in three volumes in London in 1885. The tale "Théodolinde" was published there with the title "Rose Agathe." "A Light Man" has also been reprinted from *The Galaxy* in America in a collection of short stories, "Stories by American Authors," Volume V, 1884, but not in any American editions of Henry James's works.

Like the tales in "A Landscape Painter," these stories are reprinted from the periodicals wherein they first appeared and not from the English editions. Of the nine tales I have collected here and in "A Landscape Painter," seven were published by James in England in "Stories Revived," constituting half of that collection.

From an autobiographical point of view, the most interesting tale in this volume is "Benvolio." The poet Benvolio is evidently a bit of self-portraiture. Not that Henry James had the identical experience

of his character. But the reader will scarcely fail to recognize in Benvolio the restless type divided between love and literature, for which James was his own model. Henry James himself tells us that he drew on autobiographical material in writing his early tales.

It is interesting to observe the picture of the young James as he shows it to us in his early works. For it is safe to assume that the type of character he draws most frequently is the one that approximates most closely to himself. The young man we meet oftenest in the pages of James's early tales and works is a romantic, gentlemanly, persistent wooer, a young man travelling in Europe, interested in art or literature. He falls in love, often with no encouragement, and is invariably baffled in his love. In almost every case, however, the youth takes his medicine, for he is chivalrous to the point of annoyance, and he never forgets that he is a gentleman. There are several such types in "The Portrait of a Lady." Roderick Hudson is of that type. Sometimes the young man has his affection returned but is thwarted in the end, like Christopher Newman in "The American." And in many of James's shorter stories the plot centers round the ill success of a man desiring marriage.

Such then, in the large, must have been our young author himself. This view of him we find confirmed

in his letters, though those so far published belong mainly to the late period of his life. In his letters we see James a lonely bachelor, thirsting for love and friendship, clinging tenaciously with beautiful veneration and affection to relatives, old and young friends, and not excluding the fair sex in his Platonic admiration.

In a word he is very much like the young men we meet oftenest in the tales of "A Landscape Painter" and "Master Eustace."

ALBERT MORDELL.

Philadelphia, August, 1920.

MASTER EUSTACE

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HAVING handed me my cup of tea, she proceeded to make her own; an operation she performed with a delicate old-maidish precision I delighted to observe.

The story is not my own—she then began—but that of persons with whom for a time I was intimately connected. I have led a quiet life. This is my only romance—and it's the romance of others. When I was a young woman of twenty-two my poor mother died, after a long, weary illness, and I found myself obliged to seek a new home. Making a home requires time and money. I had neither to spare, so I advertised for a "situation," rating my accomplishments modestly, and asking rather for kind treatment than high wages. Mrs. Garnyer immediately answered my advertisement. She offered me a fair salary and a peaceful asylum. I was to teach her little boy the rudiments of my slender stock of sciences and to make myself gen-

erally useful. Something in her tone and manner assured me that in accepting this latter condition I was pledging myself to no very onerous servitude, and I never found reason to repent of my bargain. I had always valued my freedom before all things, and it seemed to me that in trading it away even partially I was surrendering a priceless treasure; but Mrs. Garnyer made service easy. I liked her from the first, and I doubt that she ever fairly measured my fidelity and affection. She knew that she could trust me, and she always spoke of me as "a good creature"; but she never estimated the trouble I saved her, or the little burdens I lifted from her pretty, feeble shoulders. Both in her position and her person there was something singularly appealing. She was in those days—indeed she always remained—a very pretty little woman. But she had grace even more than beauty. She was young, and looked even younger than her years; slight, light of tread and of gesture, though not at all rapid (for in all her movements there was a kind of pathetic morbid languor), and fairer, whiter, purer in complexion than any woman I have seen. She reminded me of a sketch from which the "shading" has been omitted. She had her shadows indeed, as well as her lights; but they were all turned inward. She might have seemed compounded of the airy substance of lights and shadows. Nature

in making her had left out that wholesome leaden ballast of will, of logic, of worldly zeal, with which we are all more or less weighted. Experience, however, had given her a burden to carry; she was evidently sorrow-laden. She shifted the cruel weight from shoulder to shoulder, she ached and sighed under it, and in the depths of her sweet natural smile you saw it pressing the tears from her soul. Mrs. Garnyer's trouble, I confess, was in my eyes an added charm. I was desperately fond of a bit of romance, and as I was plainly never to have one of my own, I made the most of my neighbor's. This secret sadness of hers would have covered more sins than I ever had to forgive her. At first, naturally, I connected her unavowed sorrow with the death of her husband; but as time went on, I found reason to believe that there had been little love between the pair. She had married against her will. Mr. Garnyer was fifteen years her senior, and, as she frankly intimated, coarsely and cruelly dissipated. Their married life had lasted but three years, and had come to an end to her great and obvious relief. Had he done her while it lasted some irreparable wrong? I fancied so; she was like a garden rose with half its petals plucked. He had left her with diminished means, though her property (mostly her own) was still ample for her needs. These, with those of her son, were extremely sim-

ple. To certain little luxuries she was obstinately attached; but her manner of life was so monotonous and frugal that she must have spent but a fraction of her income. It was her single son—the heir of her hopes, the apple of her eye—that she intrusted to my care. He was five years old, and she had taught him his letters—a great feat, she seemed to think; she was as proud of it as if she had invented the alphabet for the occasion. She had called him Eustace, for she meant that he should have the best of everything—the prettiest clothes, the prettiest playthings, and the prettiest name. He was himself as pretty as his name, though but little like his mother. He was slight like her, but far more nervous and decided, and he had neither her features nor her coloring. Least of all had he her expression. Mrs. Garnyer's attitude was one of tender, pensive sufferance modified by hopes—a certain half-mystical hope which seemed akin to religion, but which was not all religion, for the heaven she dreamed of was lodged here below. The boy from his early childhood wore an air of defiance and authority. He was not one to wait for things, good or evil, but to snatch boldly at the one sort and snap his fingers at the other. He had a pale, dark skin, not altogether healthy in tone; a mass of fine brown hair, which seemed given him just to emphasize by its dancing sweep the petulant little nods and shakes

of his head; and a deep, wilful, malicious eye. His eyes told me from the first that I should have no easy work with him; and in spite of a vast expense of tact and tenderness, no easy work it turned out to be. His wits were so quick, however, and his imagination so lively, that I gradually managed to fill out his mother's meagre little programme of study. This had been drawn up with a sparing hand; her only fear was of his being overworked. The poor lady had but a dim conception of what a man of the world is expected to know. She thought, I believe, that with his handsome face, his handsome property, and his doting mother, he would need to know little more than how to sign that pretty name of Eustace to replies to invitations to dinners. I wonder now that with her constant interference I contrived to set the child intellectually on his legs. Later, when he had a tutor, I received a compliment for my perseverance.

The truth is, I became fond of him; his very imperfections fascinated me. He would soon enough have to take his chance of the world's tolerance, and society would cease to consist for him of a couple of coaxing women. I told Mrs. Garnyer that there was never an easier child to spoil, and that those caressing hands of hers would sow a crop of formidable problems for future years. But Mrs. Garnyer was utterly incapable of taking a

rational view of matters, or of sacrificing to-day to to-morrow; and her folly was the more incurable as it was founded on a strange, moonshiny little principle—a crude, passionate theory that love, love, pure love is the sum and substance of maternal duty; and that the love which reasons and exacts and denies is cruel and wicked and hideous. "I know you think I'm a silly goose," she said, "and not fit to have a child at all. But you're wrong—I promise you you're wrong. I'm very reasonable, I'm very patient; I have a great deal to bear—more than you know—and I bear it very well. But one can't be always on the stretch—always hard and wise and good. In some things one must break down and be one's poor, natural, lonely self. Eustace can't turn out wrong; it's impossible; it would be too cruel. You mustn't say it nor hint it. I shall do with him as my heart bids me; he's all I have; he consoles me."

My notions perhaps were a little old-fashioned; but surely it will never altogether go out of fashion to teach a child that he is not to have the moon by crying for it. Now Eustace had a particular fancy for the moon—for everything bright and inaccessible and absurd. His will was as sharp as a steel spring, and it was vain to attempt to bend it or break it. He had an indefeasible conviction that he was number one among men; and if he had been born in

the purple, as they say, of some far-off Eastern court, or the last consummate fruit of a shadowy line of despots, he couldn't have been more closely curtained in this superb illusion. I pierced it here and there as roughly as I dared; but his mother's light fingers speedily repaired my punctures. The poor child had no sense of justice. He had the graceful virtues, but not the legal ones. He could condescend, he could forgive, he could permit this, that, and the other, with due leave asked; but he couldn't endure the hint of conflicting right. Poor puny little mortal, sitting there wrapped in his golden mist, listening to the petty trickle of his conscious favor and damming it—a swelling fountain of privileges! He could love, love passionately; but he was so jealous and exacting that his love cost you very much more than it was worth. I found it no sinecure to possess the confidence I had striven so cunningly to obtain. He fancied it a very great honor that he should care to harness me up as his horse, to throw me his ball by the hour, to have me joggle with him (sitting close to the middle) on the see-saw till my poor bones ached. Nevertheless, in this frank, childish arrogance there was an almost irresistible charm, and I was absurdly flattered by enjoying his favor. Poor me! at twenty-three I was his first "conquest"—the first in a long list, as I believe it came to be. If he

demanded great license, he used it with a peculiar grace of his own, and he admitted the corresponding obligation of being clever and brilliant. As a child even, he seemed to be in a sort of occult sympathy with the picturesque. His talents were excellent, and teaching him, whatever it may have been, was at least not dull work. It was indeed less to things really needful than to the luxuries of learning that he took most kindly. He had an excellent ear for music, and though he never fairly practised, he turned off an air as neatly as you could have wished. In this he resembled his mother, who was a natural musician. She, however, was always at the piano, and whenever I think of her in those early years, I see her sitting before it musingly, half sadly, with her pretty head on one side, her fair braids thrust behind her ears—ears from which a couple of small but admirable diamonds were never absent—and her white hands wandering over the notes, seeking vaguely for an air which they seemed hardly to dare to remember. Eustace had an insatiable appetite for stories, though he was one of the coolest and most merciless of critics. I can fancy him now at my knee with his big, superbly-expectant eyes fastened on my lips, demanding more wonders and more, till my poor little short-winded invention had to cry mercy for its impotence. Do my best, I could never startle him; my giants were never big enough

and my fairies never small enough, and my enchanters, my prisoners, my castles never on the really grand scale of his own imaginative needs. I felt pitifully prosaic. At last he would always open his wilful little mouth and gape in my face with a dreadfully dry want of conviction. I felt flattered when by chance I had pleased him, for, by a precocious instinct, he knew tinsel from gold. "Look here," he would say, "you're dreadfully ugly; what makes you so ugly? Your nose is so big at the end." (You needn't protest; I *was* ugly. Like most very plain women, I have improved with time.) Of course I used to rebuke him for his rudeness, though I secretly thanked it, for it taught me a number of things. Once he said something, I forget what, which made me burst into tears. It was the first time, and the last; for I found that, instead of stirring his pity, tears only moved his contempt, and apparently a kind of cynical, physical disgust. The best way was to turn the tables on him by pretending to be cool and indifferent and superior. In that case he himself would condescend to tears—bitter, wrathful tears. Then you had perhaps gained nothing, but you had lost nothing. In every other case you had.

Of course these close relations lasted but a couple of years. I had made him very much wiser than myself; he was growing tall and boyish and terribly

inquisitive. My poor little stories ceased to have any illusion for him; and he would spend hours lying on his face on the carpet, kicking up his neat little legs and poring over the "Arabian Nights," the "Fairy Queen," the dozen prime enchanters of childhood. My advice would have been to pack him off to school; but I might as well have asked his mother to send him to the penitentiary. He was to be educated *en prince;* he was to have a teacher to himself. I thought sympathetically of the worthy pedagogue who was to enjoy Eustace without concurrence. But such a one was easily found—in fact, he was found three times over. Three private tutors came and went successively. They fell in love, categorically, with Mrs. Garnyer. Their love indeed she might have put up with; but unhappily, unlike Viola, they told their love—by letter—with an offer of their respective hands. Their letters were different, but to Mrs. Garnyer their hands were all alike, and alike distasteful. "The horrid creatures!" was her invariable commentary. "I wouldn't speak to them for the world. My dear, you must do it." And I, who had never declined an offer on my own account, went to work in this wholesale fashion for my friend! You will say that young as she was, pretty, independent, lovely, Mrs. Garnyer would have looked none the worse for a spice of coquetry. Nay, in her own eyes, she would have been hideous.

Her greatest charm for me was a brave little passion of scorn for this sort of levity, and indeed a general contempt for cheap sentimental effects. It was as if, from having drunk at the crystal headspring, she had lost her taste for standing water. She was absolutely indifferent to attention; in fact, she seemed to shrink from it. She hadn't a trace of personal vanity; she was even without visible desire to please. Unfortunately, as you see, she pleased in spite of herself. As regards love, she had an imposing array of principles; on this one point her floating imagination found anchorage. "It's either a passion," she said, "or it's nothing. You can know it by being willing to give up everything for it—name and fame, past and future, this world and the next. Do you keep back a feather's weight of tenderness and trust? Then you're not in love. You must risk everything, for you get everything —if you're happy. I can't understand a woman trifling with love. They talk about the unpardonable sin; that's it, it seems to me. Do you know the word in the language I most detest? *Flirtation.* Poh! it makes me ill." When Mrs. Garnyer uttered this hint of an esoteric doctrine, her clear blue eyes would become clouded with the gathered mists of memory. In this matter she understood herself and meant what she said.

Defiant as she was of admiration, she saw little

of the world. She met her few friends but two or three times a year, and was without a single intimate. As time went on, she came to care more for me than for anyone. When Eustace had outgrown my teaching, she insisted on my remaining in any capacity I chose—as housekeeper, companion, seamstress, guest; I might make my own terms. I became a little of each of these, and with the increasing freedom of our intercourse grew to regard her as a younger and weaker sister. I gave her, for what it was worth, my frankest judgment on all things. Her own confidence always stopped short of a certain point. A little curtain of reticence seemed always to hang between us. Sometimes I fancied it growing thinner and thinner, becoming almost transparent and revealing the figures behind it. Sometimes it seemed to move and flutter in the murmur of our talk, so that in a moment it might drop or melt away into air. But it was a magical web; it played a hundred tormenting tricks, and year after year it hung in its place. Of course this inviolate mystery stirred my curiosity, but I can't say more for the disinterested tenderness I felt for Mrs. Garnyer than that it never unduly irritated it. I lingered near the door of her Blue-Beard's chamber, but I never peeped through the keyhole. She was a poor lady with a secret; I took her into my heart, secret and all. She proclaimed that her isola-

tion was her own choice, and pretended to be vastly content that society let her so well alone. She made her widowhood serve as a motive for her lonesome days, and declared that her boy's education amply filled them. She was a widow, however, who never of her own accord mentioned her husband's name, and she wore her weeds very lightly. She was very fond of white, and for six months of the year was rarely seen in a dark dress. Occasionally, on certain fixed days, she would flame forth in some old-fashioned piece of finery from a store which she religiously preserved, and would flash about the house in rose-color or blue. One day, her boy's birthday, she kept with fantastic solemnity. It fell in the middle of September. On this occasion she would put on a faded ball-dress, overload herself with jewels and trinkets, and dress her hair with flowers. Eustace, too, she would trick out in a suit of crimson velvet, and in this singular guise the pair would walk with prodigious gravity about the garden and up and down the avenue. Every now and then she would stoop and give him a convulsive hug. The child himself seemed to feel the magnitude of this festival, and played his part with precocious discretion. He would appear at dark with the curl still in his hair, his velvet trousers unstained, his ruffles uncrumpled. In the evening the coachman let off rockets in the garden; we feasted on ice-

cream, and a bottle of champagne was sent to the kitchen. No wonder Master Eustace took on the graces of an heir-apparent! Once, I remember, the mother and son were overtaken in the festal promenade by some people who had come to live in the neighborhood, and who drove up rather officiously to leave their cards. They stared in amazement from the carriage window, and were told Mrs. Garnyer was not at home. A few days later we heard that Mrs. Garnyer was out of her mind; she had been found masquerading in her grounds with her little boy, in the most indecent costume. From time to time she received an invitation, and occasionally she accepted one. When she went out she deepened her mourning, but she always came home in a fret. "It is the last house I will go to," she declared, as I helped her to undress. "People's neglect I can bear, and thank them for it; but Heaven deliver me from their kindness! I won't be patronized—I won't, I won't! Shall I, my boy? We'll wait till you grow up, shan't we, my darling? Then his poor little mother shan't be patronized, shall she, my brave little man?" The child was constantly dangling at his mother's skirts, and was seldom beyond the reach of some such passionate invocation.

A preceptor had at last been found of a less inflammable composition than the others—a worthy,

elderly German of fair attainments, with a stout, sentimental wife—she gave music lessons in town—who monopolized his ardors. He was a mild, patient man—a nose of wax, as the saying is. A pretty nose it grew to be in Eustace's supple fingers! I'll answer for it that in all those years he never carried a point. I believe that, like me, he had begun with tears; but finding this an altogether losing game, he was content now to take off his spectacles, drop his head on one side, look imploringly at his pupil with his weak blue eyes, and then exhale his renunciation in a plaintive *Lieber Gott!* Under this discipline the boy bloomed like a flower. But it was to my sense a kind of hothouse growth. His tastes were sedentary, and he lived largely within doors. He kept a horse and took long lonely rides; but most of the time he spent lounging over a book, trifling at the piano, or fretting over a water-color sketch, which he was sure to throw aside in disgust. One amusement he pursued with unwearying constancy; it was a sign of especial good humor, and I never knew it to fail him. He would sit for hours lounging in a chair, with his head thrown back and his legs extended, staring at vacancy, or what seemed to us so, but a vacancy filled with the silent revel of his fancy and the images it evoked. What was the substance of these beatific visions? The broad, happy life before him, the great world

whose far-off murmurs caressed his ear—the joys of consummate manhood—pleasure, success, prosperity—a kind of triumphant and transfigured egotism. His reveries swarmed with ideal shapes and transcendent delights; his handsome young face, his idle, insolent smile were the cold reflections of their brightness. His mother, after watching him for a while in these moods, would steal up behind him and kiss him softly on the forehead, as if to marry his sweet illusions to sweet reality. For my part, I wanted to divorce them. It was a sad pity, I thought, that desire and occasion in the lad's life played so deftly into each other's hands. I longed to spoil the game, to shuffle the cards afresh and give him a taste of bad luck. I felt as if between them—she by her measureless concessions, he by his consuming arrogance—they were sowing a crop of dragon's teeth. This sultry summer of youth couldn't last forever, and I knew that the poor lady would be the first to suffer by a change of weather. He would turn some day in his passionate vanity and rend the gentle creature who had fed it with the delusive wine of her love. And yet he had a better angel as well as a worse. It was a marvel to see how this sturdy seraph tussled with the fiends, and, in spite of bruises and ruffled pinions, returned again and again to the onset. There were days when his generous, boyish gayety—the natural

sunshine of youth and intelligence—warmed our women's hearts to their depths and kindled our most trusting smiles. Me, as he grew older, he treated as a licensed old-time friend. I was the prince's jester. I used to tell him his truths, as the French say. He believed them just enough to feel an agreeable irritation in listening; for the rest, doubtless, they seemed as vague and remote as a croaking good-wife's gossip. There were moments, I think, when the eternal blue sky of his mother's temper wearied his capricious brain. At such times he would come and sprawl on the sofa near my little work-table, clipping my threads, mixing my spools, mislaying my various utensils, and criticizing my work without reserve—chattering, gossiping, complaining, boasting. With all his faults Eustace had one sovereign merit—that merit without which even the virtues he lacked lose half their charms: he was superbly frank. He was only too transparent. The light of truth played through his rank pretensions, and against it they stood relieved in his hard tenacity, like young trees against a sunset. He uttered his passions, and uttered them only too loudly; you received ample notice of his vengeance. It came as a matter of course; he never took it out in talk; but you were warned.

If these intense meditations of which I have spoken followed exclusively the vista of his per-

sonal fortunes, his conversation was hardly more disinterested. It was altogether about himself—his ambitions, his ailments, his dreams, his needs, his intentions. He talked a great deal of his property, and, though he had a great aversion to figures, he knew the amount of his expectations before he was out of jackets. He had a shrewd relish for luxury —and indeed, as he respected pretty things and used them with a degree of tenderness which he by no means lavished upon animated objects, saving, sparing, and preserving them, this seemed to me one of his most human traits, though, I admit, an expensive virtue—and he promised to spend his fortune in books and pictures, in art and travel. His mother was imperiously appealed to to do the honors of his castles in the air. She would look at him always with her doting smile, and with a little glow of melancholy in her eyes—a faint tribute to some shadowy chance that even her Eustace might reckon without his host. She would shake her head tenderly, or lean it on his shoulder and murmur, "Who knows, who knows? It's perhaps as foolish, my son, to try and forecast happiness as to attempt to take the measure of misery. We know them each when they come. Whatever comes to us, at all events, we shall meet it together." Resting in this delicious contact, with her arm round his neck and her cheek on his hair, she would close her eyes in

a kind of tremor of ecstacy. As I have never had a son myself, I can speak of maternity but by hearsay; but I feel as if I knew some of its secrets, as if I had gained from Mrs. Garnyer a revelation of maternal passion. The perfect humility of her devotion, indeed, seemed to me to point to some motive deeper than vulgar motherhood. It looked like a kind of penance, a kind of pledge. Had she done him some early wrong? Did she meditate some wrong to come? Did she wish to purchase pardon for the past or impunity for the future? One might have fancied from the lad's calm relish of her incense—as if it were the fumes of some perfumed chibouque palpitating lazily through his own lips—that he had a comfortable sense of something to forgive. In fact, he had something to forgive us all—our dullness, our vulgarity, our not guessing his unuttered desires—the want of a supercelestial harmony between our wills and his. I fancied, however, that there were even moments when he turned dizzy on the cope of this awful gulf of his mother's self-sacrifice. Fixing his eyes, then, an instant to steady himself, he took comfort in the thought that she had ceased to suffer—her personal ambitions lay dead at the bottom. He could vaguely see them—distant, dim, motionless. It was to be hoped that no adventurous ghost of these shuffled passions would climb upward to the light.

A frequent source of complaint with Eustace, when he had no more immediate displeasure, was that he had not known his father. He had formed a mental image of the late Mr. Garnyer which I am afraid hardly tallied at all points with the original. He knew that his father had been a man of pleasure, and he had painted his portrait in ideal hues. What a charming father—a man of pleasure! the boy thought, fancying that gentlemen of this stamp take their pleasure in the nursery. What pleasure they might have shared; what rides, what talks, what games, what adventures—what far other hours than those he passed in the deserted billiard-room (this had been one of Mr. Garnyer's pleasures) clicking the idle balls in the stillness. He learned to talk very early of shaping his life on his father's. What he had done his son would do. A dozen odds and ends which had belonged to Mr. Garnyer he carried to his room, where he arranged them on his mantel-shelf like relics on a high altar. When he had turned seventeen he began to smoke an old silver-mounted pipe which had his father's initials embossed on the bowl. "It would be a great blessing," he said as he puffed this pipe—it made him dismally sick, for he hated tobacco—"to have some man in the house. It's so fearfully womanish here. No one but you two and Hauff, and what's he but an old woman? Mother, why have you always lived

in this way? What's the matter with you? You've got no *savoir vivre*. What are you blushing about? That comes of moping here all your days—that you blush for nothing. I don't want my mother to blush for anything or anyone, not even for me. But I give you notice, I can stand it no longer. Now I'm seventeen, it's time I should see the world. I'm going to travel. My father travelled; he went all over Europe. There's a little French book upstairs, the poems of Parny—it's awfully French, too—with 'Henry Garnyer, Paris, 1802,' on the fly-leaf. I must go to Paris. I shan't go to college. I've never been to school. I want to be complete—privately educated altogether. Very few people are, here; it's quite a distinction. Besides, I know all I want to know. Hauff brought me out some college catalogues. They're absurd; he laughs at them. We did all that three years ago. I know more about books than most young fellows; what I want is knowledge of the world. My father had it, and you haven't, mother. But he had plenty of taste, too. Hauff says that little edition of Parny is very rare. I shall bring home lots of such things. You'll see!" Mrs. Garnyer listened to such effusions of filial emulation in sad, distracted silence. I couldn't but pity her. She knew that her husband was no proper model for her child; yet she couldn't in decency turn his heart again his father's memory. She took

refuge in that attitude of tremulous contemplation which committed her neither to condemnation of her husband nor to approval with her son.

She had recourse at this period, as I have known her to do before, to a friend attached to a mercantile house in India—an old friend, she had told me; "in fact," she had added, "my only friend, a man to whom I am under immense obligations." Once in six months there came to her from this distant benefactor a large square letter, heavily sealed and covered with foreign post-marks. I used to fancy it a kind of bulletin of advice for the coming half year. Advice about what? Her cares were so few, her habits so simple, that they offered scanty matter for discussion. But now, of course, came a packet of counsel as to Eustace's absence. I knew that she dreaded it; but since her oracle had spoken, she wore a brave face. She was certainly a devout postulant. She concealed from Eustace the extent of her dependence on this far-away adviser, for the boy would have resented such interference, even though it favored his own schemes. She had always read her friend's letters in secret; this was the only practice of her life she failed to share with her son. Me she now for the first time admitted into her confidence. "Mr. Cope strongly recommends my letting him go," she said. "He says it will make a man of him. He needs to rub against other men. I

suppose at least," she cried with her usual sweet fatuity, "it will do other men no harm! Perhaps I don't love him as I ought, and that I must lose him awhile to learn to prize him. If I only get him back again! It would be monstrous that I shouldn't! But why are we cursed with these frantic woes and fears? It's a weary life!" She would have said more if she had known that it was not his departure but his return that was to be cruel.

The excellent Mr. Hauff was deemed too mild and infirm to cope with the hazards of travel; but a companion was secured in the person of his nephew, an amiable young German who claimed to possess erudition and discretion in equal manner. For a week before he left us Eustace was so serene and joyous of humor as to double his mother's sense of loss. "I give her into your care," he said to me. "If anything happens to her, I shall hold you responsible. She is very woe-begone just now, but she'll cheer up yet. But, mother, you're not to be too cheerful, mind. You're not to forget me an instant. If you do, I'll never forgive you. I insist on being missed. There's little enough merit in loving me when I'm here; I wish to be loved in my absence." For many weeks after he left, he might have been satisfied. His mother wandered about like a churchyard ghost keeping watch near a buried treasure. When his letters began to come, she read

them over a dozen times, and sat for hours with her eyes closed holding them in her hand. They were wretchedly meagre and hurried; but their very brevity gratified her. He was prosperous and happy, and could snatch but odd moments from his pleasure-taking.

One morning, after he had been away some three months, there came two letters, one from Eustace, the other from India, the latter very much in advance of its time. Mrs. Garnyer opened the Indian letter first. I was pouring out tea; I observed her from behind the urn. As her eyes ran over the pages she turned deadly pale; then raising her glance she met mine. Immediately her paleness turned to crimson. She rose to her feet and hurried out of the room, leaving Eustace's letter untouched on the table. This little fact was eloquent, and my curiosity was aroused. Later in the day it was partially satisfied. She came to me with a singular conscious look—the look of a sort of oppression of happiness—and announced that Mr. Cope was coming home. He had obtained release from his engagements in India, and would arrive in a fortnight. She uttered herewith no words of rejoicing, but I fancied her joy was of the unutterable sort. As the days elapsed, however, her emotion betrayed itself in a restless, aimless flutter of movement, so intense as to seem to me almost painful. She roamed about

the house singing to herself, gazing out of the windows, shifting the chairs and tables, smoothing the curtains, trying vaguely to brighten the faded look of things. Before every mirror she paused and inspected herself, with that frank audacity of pretty women which I have always envied, tucking up a curl of her blond hair or smoothing a crease in those muslins which she always kept so fresh. Of Eustace for the moment she rarely spoke; the boy's prediction had not been so very much amiss. Who was this wonderful Mr. Cope, this mighty magician?

I very soon learned. He arrived on the day he had fixed, and took up his lodging in the house. From the moment I looked at him, I felt that here was a man I should like. My poor unflattered soul, I suppose, was won by the kindness of his greeting. He had often heard of me, he said; he knew how good a friend I had been to Mrs. Garnyer; he begged to bespeak a proportionate friendship for himself. I felt as if I were amply thanked for my years of household zeal. But in spite of this pleasant assurance, I had a sense of being for the moment altogether *de trop*. He was united to his friend by a closer bond than I had suspected. I left them alone with their mutual secrets and effusions, and confined myself to my own room; though indeed I had noticed between them a sort of sentimental intelligence, so deep and perfect that many words were

exchanged without audible speech. Mrs. Garnyer underwent a singular change; I seemed to know her now for the first time. It was as if she had flung aside a veil which muffled her tones and blurred her features. There was a new decision in her tread, a deeper meaning in her smile. So, at thirty-eight her girlhood had come back to her! She was as full of blushes and random prattle and foolish falterings for very pleasure as a young bride. Upon Mr. Cope the years had set a more ineffaceable seal. He was a man of forty-five, but you would have given him ten years more. He had that look which I have always liked of people who have lived in hot climates, a bronzed complexion, and a cool deliberate gait, as if he had learned to think twice before moving. He was tall and lean, yet extremely massive in shape, like a stout man emaciated by circumstances. His hair was thin and perfectly white, and he wore a grizzled moustache. He dressed in loose, light-colored garments of those fine Eastern stuffs. I had a singular impression of having seen him before, but I could never say when or where. He was extremely deaf—so deaf that I had to force my voice; though I observed that Mrs. Garnyer easily made him hear by speaking slowly and looking at him. He had peculiarly that patient appealing air which you find in very deaf persons less frequently than in the blind, but which has with

them an even deeper eloquence, enforced as it is by the normal pathos of the eye. It has an especially mild dignity where, as in Mr. Cope, it overlies a truly masculine mind. He had been obliged to make good company of himself, and the glimpses that one got of this blessed fellowship in stillness were of a kind to make one long to share it. But with others, too, he was a charming talker, though he was obliged to keep the talk in his own hands. He took your response for granted with a kind of conciliating *bonhomie,* guessed with a glance at your opinion, and phrased it usually more wittily than you would have done.

For ten years I had been pitying Mrs. Garnyer; it was odd to find myself envying her. Patient waiting is no loss; at last her day had come. I had always rather wondered at her patience; it was spiced with a logic all its own. But she had lived by precept and example, by chapter and verse; for *his* sake it was easy to be wise. I say for "his" sake, because as a matter of course I now connected her visitor with that undefined secret which had been one of my earliest impressions of Mrs. Garnyer. Mr. Cope's presence renewed my memory of it. I fitted the key to the lock, but on coming to open the casket I was disappointed to find that the best of the mystery had evaporated. Mr. Cope, I imagined, had been her first and only love. Her

parents had frowned on him and forced her into a marriage with poor dissolute Mr. Garnyer—a course the more untender as he had already spent half his own property and was likely to make sad havoc with his wife's. He had a high social value, which the girl's own family, who were plain enough people to have had certain primitive scruples in larger measure, deemed a compensation for his vices. The discarded lover, thinking she had not resisted as firmly as she might, embarked for India, and there, half in spite, half in despair, married as sadly remiss as herself. She had trifled with his happiness; he lived to repent. His wife lived as well to perpetuate his misery; it was my belief that she had only recently died, and that this event was the occasion of his return. When he arrived he wore a weed on his hat; the next day it had disappeared. Reunion had come to them in the afternoon of life, when the tricks and graces of passion are no longer becoming; but when these have spent themselves something of passion still is left, and this they were free to enjoy. They had begun to enjoy it with the chastened zeal of which I caught the aroma. Such was my reading of the riddle. Right or not, at least it made sense.

I had promised Eustace to write to him, and one afternoon as I sat alone, well pleased to have a theme, I despatched him a long letter full of the

praises of Mr. Cope, and by implication of the echo of his mother's happiness. I wished to anticipate his possible suspicions and reconcile him with the altered situation. But after I had posted my letter, it seemed to me that I had spoken too frankly. I doubted whether, even amid the wholesome novelty of travel, he had unlearned the old trick of jealousy. Jealousy surely would have been quite misplaced, for Mr. Cope's affection for his hostess embraced her boy in its ample scope. He regretted the lad's absence; he manifested the kindliest interest in everything that spoke of him; he turned over his books, he looked at his sketches, he examined and compared the half dozen portraits which the fond mother had caused to be executed at various stages of his growth. One hot day, when poor old Mr. Hauff travelled out from town for news of his pupil, he made a point of being introduced and of shaking his hand. The old man stayed to dinner, and on Mr. Cope's proposition we drank the boy's health in brimming glasses. The old German of course wept profusely; it was Eustace's mission to make people cry. I fancied too I saw a tear on Mr. Cope's lid. The cup of his contentment was full; at a touch it overflowed. On the whole, however, he took this bliss of reunion more quietly than his friend. He was a melancholy man. He had the air of one for whom the moral of this fable of life

has greater charms than the plot, and who has made up his mind to ask no favors of destiny. When he met me, he used to smile gently, frankly, saying little; but I had a vast relish for his smile. It seemed to say much—to murmur, "Receive my compliments. You and I are a couple of tested souls; we understand each other. We are not agog with the privileges of existence, like charity children on a picnic. We have had, each of us, to live for years without the thing we once fancied gave life its only value. We have tasted of bondage, and patience, taken up as a means, has grown grateful as an end. It has cured us of eagerness." So easily it gossiped, the smile of our guest. No wonder I liked it.

One evening, a month after his advent, Mrs. Garnyer came to me with a strange embarrassed smile. "I have something to tell you," she said; "something that will surprise you. Do you consider me a very old woman? I am old enough to be wiser, you'll say. But I've never been so wise as to-day. I'm engaged to Mr. Cope. There! make the best of it. I have no apologies to make to any one," she went on with a kind of defiant manner. "It's between ourselves. If we suit each other, it's no one's business. I know what I'm about. He means to remain in this country; we should be constantly together and extremely intimate. As he

says, I'm young enough to be—what do they call it? —compromised. Of course, therefore, I'm young enough to marry. It will make no difference with you; you'll stay with me all the same. Who cares, after all, what I do? No one but Eustace, and he will thank me for giving him such a father. Ah, I shall do well by my boy!" she cried, clasping her hands with ecstacy. "I shall do better than he knows. My property, it appears, is dreadfully entangled. Mr. Garnyer did as he pleased with it; I was given to him with my hands tied. Mr. Cope has been looking into it, and he tells me that it will be a long labor to restore order. I have been living all these years at the mercy of unprincipled strangers. But now I have given up everything to Mr. Cope. *He'*ll drive the money-changers from the temple! It's a small reward to marry him. Eustace has no head for money matters; he only knows how to spend. For years now he needn't think of them. Mr. Cope is our providence. Don't be afraid; Eustace won't blaspheme! and at last he'll have a companion—the best, the wisest, the kindest. You know how he used to long for one—how tired he was of me and you. It will be a new life. Oh, I'm a happy mother—at last—at last! Don't look at me so hard; I'm a blushing bride, remember. Smile, laugh, kiss me. There! You're a good creature. I shall make my boy a present—the hand-

somest that ever was made! Poor Mr. Cope! I'm happier than he. I have had my boy all these years, and he has had none. He has the heart of a father. He has longed for a son. Do you know," she added with a strange deepening of her smile, "that I think he marries me as much for my son's sake as for my own? He marries me at all events, boy and all." This speech was uttered with a forced and hurried animation which betrayed the effort to cheat herself into pure enthusiasm. The matter was not quite so simple as she tried to believe. Nevertheless, I was deeply pleased, and I kissed her in genuine sympathy. The more I thought of it the better I liked the marriage. It relieved me personally of a burdensome sense of ineffectual care, and it filled out solidly a kind of defenceless breach which had always existed on the worldly face of Mrs. Garnyer's position. Moreover, it promised to be full of wholesome profit for Eustace. It was a pity that Eustace had but a slender relish for wholesome profit. I ventured to hope, however, that his high esteem for his father's memory had been, at bottom, the expression of a need for counsel and support, and of a capacity to grant respect if there should be something of inspiration in it. Yet I took the liberty of suggesting to Mrs. Garnyer that she perhaps counted too implicitly on her son's concurrence; that he was always in opposition; that a margin

should be left for his possible jealousy. Of course I was called a suspicious wretch for my pains.

"For what do you take him?" she cried. "He'll thank me on his knees. I shall place them face to face. Eustace has instinct! A word to the wise, says the proverb. I know what I'm about."

She knew it, I think, hardly as well as she declared. I had deemed it my duty to make a modest little speech of congratulation to the bridegroom elect. He blushed—somewhat to my surprise—but he answered me with a grave, grateful bow. He was preoccupied; Mrs. Garnyer was of a dozen different minds about her wedding-day. I had taken for granted that they would wait for Eustace's return; but I was somewhat startled on learning that Mr. Cope disapproved of further delay. They had waited twenty years! Mrs. Garnyer told me that she had not announced the news to Eustace. She wished it to be a "surprise." She seemed, however, not altogether to believe in her surprise. Poor lady! she had made herself a restless couch. One evening, coming into the library, I found Mr. Cope pleading his cause. For the first time I saw him excited. This hint of autumnal ardor was very becoming. He turned appealingly to me. "You have great authority with this lady," he said. "Plead my case. Are we people to care for Mrs. Grundy? Has she been so very civil to us? We don't marry

to please her. I don't see why she should arrange the wedding. Mrs. Garnyer has no *trousseau* to buy, no cards to send. Indeed, I think any more airs and graces are rather ridiculous. They don't belong to our years. There's little Master Grundy, I know," he went on, smiling—"a most honorable youth! But I'll take charge of him. I should like vastly, of course, to have him at the wedding; but one of these days I shall make up for the breach of ceremony by punctually attending his own." It was only an hour before this, as it happened, that I had received Eustace's answer to my letter. It was brief and hasty, but he had found time to insert some such words as this: "I don't at all thank you for your news of Mr. Cope. I knew that my mother only wanted a chance to forget me and console herself, as they say in France. Demonstrative mothers always do. I'm like Hamlet—I don't approve of mothers consoling themselves. Mr. Cope may be an excellent fellow—I've no doubt he is; but I do hope he will have made his visit by the time I get back. The house isn't large enough for both of us. You'll find me a bigger man than when I left home. I give you warning. I've got a roaring black moustache, and I'm proportionately fiercer." I said nothing about this letter. A week later they were married. The time will always be memorable to me, apart from this matter of my story, from the

intense and overwhelming heat which then prevailed. It had lasted several days when the wedding took place; it bade fair to continue unbroken. The ceremony was performed by the little old Episcopal clergyman whose ministrations Mrs. Garnyer had regularly attended, and who had always given her a vague parochial countenance. His sister, a mature spinster who wore her hair cut short, and called herself "strong-minded," and, thus qualified, had made overtures to Mrs. Garnyer—this lady and myself were the only witnesses. The marriage had nothing of a festive air; it seemed a grave sacrifice to the unknown god. Mrs. Garnyer was very much oppressed by the heat; in the vestibule, on leaving the church, she fainted. They had arranged to go for a week to the seaside, to a place they had known of old. When she had revived we placed her in the carriage, and they immediately started. I, of course, remained in charge of the empty house, vastly envying them their seaside breezes.

On the morning after the wedding, sitting alone in the darkened library, I heard a rapid tread in the hall. My first thought of course was of burglars —my second of Eustace. In a moment he came striding into the room. His step, his glance, his whole outline foretold trouble. He was amazingly changed, and all for the better. He seemed taller, older, manlier. He was bronzed by travel and

dressed with great splendor. The moustache he had mentioned, though but a slender thing as yet, gave him, to my eye, a formidable foreign look. He gave me no greeting.

"Where's my mother?" he cried.

My heart rose to my throat; his tone seemed to put us horribly in the wrong. "She's away—for a day," I said. "But you"—and I took his hand—"pray, where have you dropped from?"

"From New York, from shipboard, from Southampton. Is this the way my mother receives me?"

"Why, she never dreamed you were coming."

"She got no letter? I wrote from New York."

"Your letter never came. She left town yesterday, for a week."

He looked at me hard. "How comes it you're not with her?"

"I am not needed. She has—she has——" But I faltered.

"Say it—say it!" he cried; and he stamped his foot. "She has a companion."

"Mr. Cope went with her," I said, in a still, small voice. I was ashamed of my tremor, I was outraged by his imperious manner, but the thought of worse to come unnerved me.

"Mr. Cope—ah!" he answered, with an indefinable accent. He looked about the room with a kind of hungry desire to detect some invidious difference

as a trace of Mr. Cope's passage. Then flinging himself into a chair, "What infernal heat!" he went on. "What a hideous climate you've got here! Do bring me a glass of water."

I brought him his glass, and stood before him as he quickly drank it. "Don't think you're not welcome," I ventured to say, "if I ask what has brought you home so suddenly."

He gave me another hard look over the top of his glass. "A suspicion. It's none too soon. Tell me what is going on between my mother and Mr. Cope."

"Eustace," I said, "before I answer you, let me remind you of the respect which under all circumstances you owe your mother."

He sprang from his chair. "Respect! I'm right, then. They mean to marry! Speak!" And as I hesitated, "You needn't speak," he cried. "I see it in your face. Thank God I'm here!"

His violence aroused me. "If you have a will to enforce in the matter," I said, "you are indeed none too soon. You're too late. Your mother is married." I spoke passionately, but in a moment I repented of my words.

"MARRIED!" the poor boy shouted. *"Married,* you say!" He turned deadly pale and stood staring at me with his mouth wide open. Then, trembling in all his limbs, he dropped into a chair. For some

moments he was silent, gazing at me with fierce stupefaction, overwhelmed by the treachery of fate. "Married!" he went on. "When, where, how? Without me—without notice—without shame! And you stood and watched it, as you stand and tell me now! I called you friend!" he cried, with the bitterest reproach. "But if my mother betrays me, what can I expect of *you?* Married!" he repeated. "Is the devil in it? I'll unmarry her! When—when—when?" And he seized me by the arm.

"Yesterday, Eustace. I entreat you to be calm."

"Calm? Is it a case for calmness? *She* was calm enough—that she couldn't wait for her son!" He flung aside the hand I had laid upon his to soothe him, and began a furious march about the room. "What has come to her? Is she mad? Has she lost her head, her heart, her memory—all that made her mine? You're joking—come, it's a horrible dream?" And he stopped before me, glaring through fiery tears. "Did she hope to keep it a secret? Did she hope to hide away her husband in a cupboard? Her husband! And I—I—I—what has she done with me? Where am I in this devil's game? Standing here crying like a schoolboy for a cut finger—for the bitterest of disappointments! She has blighted my life—she has blasted my rights. She has insulted me—dishonored me. Am I a man to treat in that fashion? Am I a man to be made

light of? Brought up as a flower and trampled as a weed! Bound in cotton and steeped in vitriol! You needn't speak"—I had tried, for pity, to remonstrate. "You can say nothing but bald folly. There's nothing to be said but this—that I'm *insulted.* Do you understand?" He uttered the word with a concentrated agony of vanity. "I guessed it from the first. I knew it was coming. Mr. Cope—Mr. Cope—always Mr. Cope. It poisoned my journey—it poisoned my pleasure—it poisoned Italy. You don't know what that means. But what matter, so long as it has poisoned my home? I held my tongue—I swallowed my rage; I was patient, I was gentle, I forbore. And for this! I could have damned him with a word! At the seaside, hey? Enjoying the breezes—splashing in the surf—picking up shells. It's idyllic, it's ideal—great heavens, it's fabulous, it's monstrous! It's well she's not here. I don't answer for myself. Yes, madam, stare, stare, wring your hands! You see an angry man, an outraged man, but a man, mind you! He means to act as one."

This sweeping torrent of unreason I had vainly endeavored to arrest. He pushed me aside, strode out of the room, and went bounding upstairs to his own chamber, where I heard him close the door with a terrible bang and turn the key. My hope was that his passion would expend itself in this first

explosion; I was glad to bear the brunt of it. But I deemed it my duty to communicate with his mother. I wrote her a hurried line: "Eustace is back—very ill. Come home." This I intrusted to the coachman, with injunctions to carry it in person to the place of her sojourn. I believed that if she started immediately on the receipt of it, she might reach home late at night. Those were days of private conveyances. Meanwhile I did my best to pacify the poor young man. There was something terrible and portentous in his rage; he seemed absolutely rabid. This was the sweet compliance, the fond assent, on which his mother had counted; this was the "surprise"! I went repeatedly to his chamber door with soft speeches and urgent prayers and offers of luncheon, of wine, of vague womanly comfort. But there came no answer but shouts and imprecations, and finally a sullen silence. Late in the day I heard him from the window order the gardener to saddle his horse; and in a short time he came stamping downstairs, booted and spurred, pale, dishevelled, with bloodshot eyes. "Where are you going," I said, "in this awful heat?"

"To ride—ride—ride myself cool!" he cried. "There's nothing so hot as my rage!" And in a moment he was in the saddle and bounding out of the gate. I went up to his room. It's wild disorder bore vivid evidence of the tumult of his temper. A

dozen things were strewn broken on the floor; old letters were lying crumpled and torn; I was sickened by the sight of a pearl necklace, snatched from his gaping valise, and evidently purchased as a present to his mother, ground into fragments on the carpet as if by his boot-heels. His father's relics were standing in a row untouched on the mantel-shelf, save for a couple of pistols mounted with his initials in silver, which were tossed upon the table. I made a brave effort to thrust them into a drawer and turn the key, but to my eternal regret I was afraid to touch them. Evening descended and wore away; but neither Eustace nor his mother returned. I sat gloomily enough on the verandah, listening for wheels or hoofs. Toward midnight a carriage rattled over the gravel; my friend descended with her husband at the door. She fluttered into my arms with a kind of shrinking yet impetuous dread. "Where is he—how is he?" she cried.

I was spared the pain of answering, for at the same moment I heard Eustace's horse clatter into the stable-yard. He had rapidly dismounted and passed into the house by one of the side windows, which opened from the piazza into the drawing-room. There the lamps were lighted. I led in my companions. Eustace had crossed the threshold of the window; the lamp-light fell upon him, relieving him against the darkness. His mother with a shriek

flung herself toward him, but in an instant with a deeper cry she stopped short, pressing her hand to her heart. He had raised his hand, and, with a gesture which had all the spiritual force of a blow, he had cast her off. "Ah, my son, my son!" she cried with a piteous moan, and looking round at us in wild bewilderment.

"I'm not your son!" said the boy in a voice half stifled with passion. "I give you up! You're not my mother! Don't touch me! You've cheated me —you've betrayed me—you've *insulted* me!" In this mad peal of imprecations, it was still the note of vanity which rang clearest.

I looked at Mr. Cope. He was deadly pale. He had seen the lad's gesture; he was unable to hear his words. He sat down in the nearest chair and eyed him wonderingly. I hurried to his poor wife's relief. She seemed smitten with a sudden tremor, a deadly chill. She clasped her hands, but she could barely find her voice. "Eustace—my boy—my darling—my own—do you know what you say? Listen, listen, Eustace. It's all for you—that you should love me more. I've done my best. I seem to have been hasty, but hasty to do for you—to do for you——" Her strength deserted her; she burst into tears. "He curses me—he denies me!" she cried. "He has killed me!"

"Cry, cry!" Eustace retorted; "cry as I've been

crying! But don't be falser than you have been. That you couldn't even wait! And you prate of my happiness! Is my happiness in a broken home—in a disputed heart—in a bullying stepfather! You've chosen him big and strong! Cry your eyes out—you're no mother of mine."

"He's killing me—he's killing me," groaned his mother. "O Heaven! if I dared to speak, I should kill *him!*" She turned to her husband. "Go to him—go to him!" she cried. "He's ill, he's mad—he doesn't know what he says. Take his hand in yours—look at him, soothe him, heal him. It's the hot weather," she rambled on. "Let him feel your touch! Eustace, Eustace, be healed!"

Poor Mr. Cope had risen to his feet, passing his handkerchief over his forehead, on which the perspiration stood in great drops. He went slowly toward the young man, bending his eyes on him half in entreaty, half in command. Before him he stopped and frankly held out his hand. Eustace eyed him defiantly from head to foot—him and his proffered friendship, enforced as it was by a gaze of the most benignant authority. Then pushing his hand savagely down, "Hypocrite!" he roared close to his face—"can you hear that?" and marched bravely out of the room. Mr. Cope shook his head with a world of tragic meaning, and for an instant exchanged with his wife a long look brimming with

anguish. She fell upon his neck shaken with resounding sobs. But soon recovering herself, "Go to him," she urged, "follow him; say everything, spare nothing. No matter for me; I've got *my* blow."

I helped her up to her room. Her strength had completely left her; she but half undressed and let me lay her on her bed. She was in a state of the intensest excitement. Every nerve in her body was thrilling and ringing. She kept murmuring to herself, with a kind of heart-breaking incoherency. "Nothing can hurt me now; I needn't be spared. Nothing can disgrace me—or grace me. I've got my blow. It's my fault—all, all, all! I heaped up folly on folly and weakness on weakness. My heart's broken; it will never serve again. You have been right, my dear—I perverted him, I taught him to strike. Oh, what a blow! He's hard—he's hard. He's cruel. He has no heart. He's blind with vanity and egotism. But it matters little now; I shan't live to suffer. I've suffered enough. I'm dying, my friend, I'm dying."

In this broken strain the poor lady poured out the bitterness of her grief. I used every art to soothe and console her, but I felt that the tenderest spot in her gentle heart had received an irreparable bruise. "I don't want to live," she murmured. "I'm disillusioned. It could never be patched up; we should

never be the same. He has shown the bottom of his soul. It's bad."

In spite of my efforts to restore her to calmness, she became—not more excited, for her strength seemed to be ebbing and her voice was low—but more painfully and incoherently garrulous. Nevertheless, from her distressing murmur I gathered the glimmer of a meaning. She seemed to wish to make a kind of supreme confession. I sat on the cope of her bed, with her hand in mine. From time to time, above her loud whispers, I heard the sound of the two gentlemen's voices. Adjoining her chamber was a large dressing-room; beyond this was Eustace's apartment. The three rooms opened upon a long uncovered balcony.

Mr. Cope had followed the young man to his own chamber, and was addressing him in a low, steady voice. Eustace apparently was silent; but there was something sullen and portentous to my ear in this unnatural absence of response.

"What have you thought of me, my friend, all these years?" his mother asked. "Have I seemed to you like other women? I haven't been like others. I have tried to be so—and you see—you see! Let me tell you. It don't matter whether you despise me—I shan't know it. These are my last words; let them be frank."

They were not, however, so frank as she intended.

She seemed to lose herself in a dim wilderness of memories; her faculty wandered, faltered, stumbled. Not from her words—they were ambiguous—but from her silence and from the rebound of my own impassioned sympathy, as it were, I guessed the truth. It blossomed into being vivid and distinct; it exhaled a long illuminating glow upon the past—a lurid light upon the present. Strange it seemed now that my suspicions had been so late to bear fruit; but our imagination is always too timid. Now all things were clear! Heaven knows that in this unpitying light I felt no contempt for the poor woman who lay before me, panting from her violated soul.

Poor victims of destiny! If I could only bring them to terms! For the moment, however, the unhappy mother and wife demanded all my attention. I left her and passed along the balcony, intending to summon her husband. The light in Eustace's room showed me the young man and his companion. They sat facing each other in momentary silence. Mr. Cope's two hands were on his knees, his eyes were fixed on the carpet, his teeth were set—as if, baffled, irate, desperate, he were preparing to play his last card. Eustace was looking at him hard, with a terribly untender gaze. It made me sick. I was on the point of rushing in and adjuring Eustace by the truth. But suddenly Mr. Cope

raised his eyes and exchanged with the boy a look with which he seemed to read his very soul. He waved his hand in the air as if to dismiss fond patience.

"If you were to see yourself as I see you," he said, "you would be vastly amazed; you would know your absurd appearance. Young as you are, you are rotten with arrogance and pride. What would you say if I were to tell you that, least of men, you have reason to be proud? Your stable boy there has more. There's a leak in your vanity; there's a blot on your escutcheon! You force me to strong measures. Let me tell you, in the teeth of your monstrous egotism, what you are. You're a——"

I knew what was coming, but I hadn't the heart to hear it. The word, ringing out, overtook my ear as I hurried back to Mrs. Cope. It was followed by a loud, incoherent cry, the sound, prolonged for some moments, of a scuffle, and then the report of a pistol. This was lost in the noise of crashing glass. Mrs. Cope rose erect in bed and shrieked aloud, "He has killed him—and me." I caught her in my arms; she breathed her last. I laid her gently on the bed and made my trembling way, by the balcony, to Eustace's room. The first glance reassured me. Neither of the men was visibly injured; the pistol lay smoking on the floor. Eustace had sunk

into a chair with his head buried in his hands. I saw his face crimson through his fingers.

"It's not murder," Mr. Cope said to me as I crossed the threshold, "but it has just missed being suicide. It has been fatal only to the looking-glass." The mirror was shivered.

"It *is* murder," I answered, seizing Eustace by the arm and forcing him to rise. "You have killed your mother. This is your father!"

My friend paused and looked at me with a triumphant air, as if she was very proud of her effect. Of course I had foreseen it half an hour ago. "What a dismal tale," I said. "But it's interesting. Of course Mrs. Cope recovered."

She was silent an instant. "You're like me," she answered. "Your imagination is timid."

"I confess," I rejoined, "I am rather at a loss how to dispose of our friend Eustace. I don't see how the two could very well shake hands—nor yet how they couldn't."

"They did once—and but once. They were for years, each in his way, lonely men. They were never reconciled. The trench had been dug too deep. Even the poor lady buried there didn't avail to fill it up. Yet the son was forgiven—the father never!"

LONGSTAFF'S MARRIAGE

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FORTY years ago that traditional and anecdotical liberty of young American women, which is notoriously the envy of their foreign sisters, was not so firmly established as at the present hour; yet it was sufficiently recognized to make it no scandal that so pretty a girl as Diana Belfield should start for the grand tour of Europe under no more imposing protection than that of her cousin and intimate friend, Miss Agatha Gosling. She had, from the European point of view, beauty enough to make her enterprise perilous—the beauty foreshadowed in her name, which might have been given her in prevision of her tall, light figure, her nobly poised head, weighted with a coronal of auburn braids, her frank quick glance and her rapid gliding step. She used often to walk about with a big dog who had the habit of bounding at her side and tossing his head against her outstretched hand; and she had, moreover, a trick of carrying her long

parasol always folded, for she was not afraid of the sunshine, across her shoulder, in the fashion of a soldier's musket on a march. Thus equipped, she looked wonderfully like that charming antique statue of the goddess of the chase which we encounter in various replicas in half the museums of the world. You half expected to see a sandal-shod foot peep out beneath her fluttering robe. It was with this tread of the wakeful huntress that she stepped upon the old sailing-vessel which was to bear her to the lands she had dreamed of. Behind her, with a great many shawls and satchels, came her little kinswoman, with quite another *démarche*. Agatha Gosling was not a beauty but she was the most judicious and most devoted of companions. These two persons had come together on the death of Diana's mother and the taking possession by the young lady of her patrimony. The first use she made of her inheritance was to divide it with Agatha, who had not a penny of her own; the next was to purchase a letter of credit upon a European banker. The cousins had contracted a classical friendship,—they had determined to be sufficient to each other, like the Ladies of Llangollen. Only, though their friendship was exclusive, their Llangollen was to be comprehensive. They would tread the pavements of historic cities and stand in the colored light-shafts of Gothic cathedrals, wander on

tinkling mules through mountain-gorges and sit among dark-eyed peasants by southern seas. It may seem singular that a beautiful girl with a pretty fortune should have been left to seek the supreme satisfaction of life in friendship tempered by sight-seeing; but Diana herself considered this pastime no beggarly alternative. Though she never told it herself, her biographer may do so; she had had, in vulgar parlance, a hundred offers. To say that she had declined them is to say too little; she had really scorned them. They had come from honorable and amiable men, and it was not her suitors in themselves that she disrelished; it was simply the idea of marrying. She found it insupportable: a fact which completes her analogy with the mythic divinity to whom I have likened her. She was passionately single, fiercely virginal; and in the straight-glancing gray eyes which provoked men to admire, there was a certain silvery ray which forbade them to hope. The fabled Diana took a fancy to a beautiful shepherd, but the real one had not yet found, sleeping or waking, her Endymion.

Thanks to this defensive eyebeam, the dangerous side of our heroine's enterprise was slow to define itself; thanks, too, to the exquisite decency of her companion. Agatha Gosling had an almost Quakerish purity and dignity; a bristling dragon could not have been a better safeguard than this glossy, gray-

breasted dove. Money, too, is a protection, and Diana had enough to purchase privacy. She traveled extensively, and saw all the churches and pictures, the castles and cottages included in the list which had been drawn up by the two friends in evening talks, at home, between two wax candles. In the evening they used to read aloud to each other from "Corinne" and "Childe Harold," and they kept a diary in common, at which they "collaborated," like French playwrights, and which was studded with quotations from the authors I have mentioned. This lasted a year, at the end of which they found themselves a trifle weary. A snug posting-carriage was a delightful habitation, but looking at miles of pictures was very fatiguing to the back. Buying souvenirs and trinkets under foreign arcades was a most absorbing occupation; but inns were dreadfully apt to be draughty, and bottles of hot water, for application to the feet, had a disagreeable way of growing lukewarm. For these and other reasons our heroines determined to take a winter's rest, and for this purpose they betook themselves to the charming town of Nice, which was then but in the infancy of its fame. It was simply one of the hundred hamlets of the Riviera,—a place where the blue waves broke on an almost empty strand, and the olive-trees sprouted at the doors of the inns. In those days Nice was Italian, and the

"Promenade des Anglais" existed only in an embryonic form. Exist, however, it did, practically, and British invalids, in moderate numbers, might have been seen taking the January sunshine beneath London umbrellas, before the many-twinkling sea. Our young Americans quietly took their place in this harmless society. They drove along the coast, through the strange, dark, huddled fishing-villages, and they rode on donkeys among the bosky hills. They painted in water-colors and hired a piano; they subscribed to the circulating library and took lessons in the language of Silvio Pellico from an old lady with very fine eyes, who wore an enormous brooch of cracked malachite, and gave herself out as the widow of a Roman exile.

They used to go and sit by the sea, each provided with a volume from the circulating library; but they never did much with their books. The sunshine made the page too dazzling, and the people who strolled up and down before them were more entertaining than the ladies and gentlemen in the novels. They looked at them constantly from under their umbrellas; they learned to know them all by sight. Many of their fellow-visitors were invalids,—mild, slow-moving consumptives. But that women enjoy the exercise of pity, I should have said that these pale promenaders were a saddening spectacle. In several of them, however, our friends took a per-

sonal interest; they watched them from day to day; they noticed their changing color; they had their ideas about who was getting better and who was getting worse. They did little, however, in the way of making acquaintances,—partly because consumptive people are no great talkers, and partly because this was also Diana's disposition. She said to her friend that they had not come to Europe to pay morning-calls; they had left their best bonnets and card-cases behind them. At the bottom of her reserve was the apprehension that she should be "admired;" which was not fatuity, but simply an inference based upon uncomfortable experience. She had seen in Europe, for the first time, certain horrid men,—polished adventurers, with offensive looks and mercenary thoughts; and she had a wholesome fear that one of these gentlemen might approach her through some accidental breach in her reserve. Agatha Gosling, who had neither in reminiscence nor in prospect the same reasons for being on the defensive, would have been glad to extend the circle of her intimacy, and would even have consented to put on a best bonnet for the purpose. But she had to content herself with an occasional murmur of small talk, on a bench before the sea, with two or three English ladies of the botanizing class; jovial little spinsters who wore stout boots, gauntlets, and "uglies," and in pursuit

of wayside flowers scrambled into places where the first-mentioned articles were uncompromisingly visible. For the rest, Agatha contented herself with spinning suppositions about the people she never spoke to. She framed a great deal of hypothetic gossip, invented theories and explanations,—generally of the most charitable quality. Her companion took no part in these harmless devisings, except to listen to them with an indolent smile. She seldom honored her fellow-mortals with finding apologies for them, and if they wished her to read their history, they must write it out in the largest letters.

There was one person at Nice upon whose biography, if it had been laid before her in this fashion, she probably would have bestowed a certain amount of attention. Agatha had noticed the gentleman first; or Agatha, at least, had first spoken of him. He was young and he looked interesting; Agatha had indulged in a good deal of wondering as to whether or no he belonged to the invalid category. She preferred to believe that one of his lungs was "affected"; it certainly made him more interesting. He used to stroll about by himself and sit for a long time in the sun, with a book peeping out of his pocket. This book he never opened; he was always staring at the sea. I say always, but my phrase demands an immediate modification; he looked at

the sea whenever he was not looking at Diana Belfield. He was tall and fair, slight, and, as Agatha Gosling said, aristocratic-looking. He dressed with a certain careless elegance, which Agatha deemed picturesque; she declared one day that he reminded her of a love-sick prince. She learned eventually from one of the botanizing spinsters that he was not a prince, that he was simply an English gentleman, Mr. Reginald Longstaff. There remained the possibility that he was love-sick; but this point could not be so easily settled. Agatha's informant had assured her, however, that if they were not princes, the Longstaffs, who came from a part of the country in which she had visited, and owned great estates there, had a pedigree which many princes might envy. It was one of the oldest and the best of English names; they were one of the innumerable untitled country families who held their heads as high as the highest. This poor Mr. Longstaff was a beautiful specimen of a young English gentleman; he looked so gentle, yet so brave; so modest, yet so cultivated! The ladies spoke of him habitually as "poor" Mr. Longstaff, for they now took for granted there was something the matter with him. At last Agatha Gosling discovered what it was, and made a solemn proclamation of the same. The matter with poor Mr. Longstaff was simply that he was in love with Diana! It was

certainly natural to suppose he was in love with some one, and, as Agatha said, it could not possibly be with herself. Mr. Longstaff was pale, with crumpled locks; he never spoke to anyone; he was evidently preoccupied, and this mild, candid face was a sufficient proof that the weight on his heart was not a bad conscience. What could it be, then, but an unrequited passion? It was, however, equally pertinent to inquire why Mr. Longstaff took no steps to bring about a requital.

"Why in the world does he not ask to be introduced to you?" Agatha Gosling demanded of her companion.

Diana replied, quite without eagerness, that it was plainly because he had nothing to say to her, and she declared with a trifle more emphasis that she was incapable of furnishing him a topic of conversation. She added that she thought they had gossiped enough about the poor man, and that if by any chance he should have the bad taste to speak to them, she should certainly go away and leave him alone with Miss Gosling. It is true, however, that at an earlier period, she had let fall the remark that he was quite the most "distinguished" person at Nice; and afterward, though, she was never the first to allude to him, she had more than once let her companion pursue the theme for some time without reminding her of its futility. The one person to

whom Mr. Longstaff was observed to speak was an elderly man of foreign aspect who approached him occasionally in the most deferential manner, and whom Agatha Gosling supposed to be his servant. This individual was apparently an Italian; he had an obsequious attitude, a pair of grizzled whiskers, an insinuating smile. He seemed to come to Mr. Longstaff for orders; presently he went away to execute them, and Agatha noticed that on retiring, he always managed to pass in front of her companion, on whom he fixed his respectful but penetrating gaze. "He knows the secret," she always said, with gentle jocoseness; "he knows what is the matter with his master and he wants to see whether he approves of you. Old servants never want their masters to marry, and I think this worthy man is rather afraid of you. At any rate, the way he stares at you tells the whole story."

"Everyone stares at me!" said Diana, wearily. "A cat may look at a king."

As the weeks went by, Agatha Gosling quite made up her mind that it *was* Mr. Longstaff's lungs. The poor young man's invalid character was now most apparent; he could hardly hold up his head or drag one foot after the other; his servant was always near him to give him an arm or to hand him an extra overcoat. No one, indeed, knew, with certainty, that he was consumptive; but Agatha

agreed with the lady who had given the information about his pedigree, that this fact was in itself extremely suspicious; for, as the little Englishwoman forcibly remarked, unless he were ill, why should he make such a mystery of it? Consumption declaring itself in a young man of family and fortune was particularly sad; such people had often diplomatic reasons for pretending to enjoy excellent health. It kept the legacy-hunters and the hungry next-of-kin from worrying them to death. Agatha observed that this poor gentleman's last hours seemed likely to be only too lonely. She felt very much like offering to nurse him; for, being no relation, he could not accuse her of mercenary motives. From time to time he got up from the bench where he habitually sat, and strolled slowly past the two friends. Every time that he came near them, Agatha had a singular feeling,—a conviction that now he was really going to speak to them, in tones of the most solemn courtesy. She could not fancy him speaking otherwise. He began, at a distance, by fixing his grave, soft eyes on Diana, and, as he advanced, you would have said that he was coming straight up to her with some tremulous compliment. But as he drew nearer, his intentness seemed to falter; he strolled more slowly, he looked away at the sea, and he passed in front of her without having the courage to let his eyes rest upon her.

Then he passed back again in the same fashion, sank down upon his bench, fatigued apparently by his aimless stroll, and fell into a melancholy reverie. To enumerate these small incidents in his deportment is to give it a melodramatic cast which it was far from possessing; something in his manner saved it from the shadow of impertinence, and it may be affirmed that not a single idler on the sunny shore suspected his speechless "attentions."

"I wonder why it doesn't annoy us more that he should look at us so much," said Agatha Gosling, one day.

"That who should look at us?" asked Diana, not at all affectedly.

Agatha fixed her eyes for a moment on her friend, and then said gently:

"Mr. Longstaff. Now, don't say 'Who is Mr. Longstaff?' " she added.

"I have got to learn, really," said Diana "that the person you appear to mean, does look at us. I have never caught him in the act."

"That is because whenever you turn your eyes toward him he looks away. He is afraid to meet them. But I see him."

These words were exchanged one day as the two friends sat as usual before the twinkling sea; and, beyond them, as usual, lounged Reginald Longstaff. Diana bent her head faintly forward and

glanced toward him. He was looking full at her and their eyes met, apparently for the first time. Diana dropped her own upon her book again, and then, after a silence of some moments, "It does annoy me," she said. Presently she added that she would go home and write a letter, and, though she had never taken a step in Europe without having Agatha by her side, Miss Gosling now allowed her to depart unattended. "You won't mind going alone?" Agatha had asked. "It is but three minutes, you know."

Diana replied that she preferred to go alone, and she moved away, with her parasol over her shoulder.

Agatha Gosling had a particular reason for this rupture of their maidenly custom. She felt a strong conviction that if she were left alone, Mr. Longstaff would come and speak to her and say something very important, and she deferred to this conviction without the sense of doing anything immodest. There was something solemn about it; it was a sort of presentiment; but it did not frighten her; it only made her feel very kind and appreciative. It is true that when at the end of ten minutes (they had seemed rather long), she saw him rise from his seat and slowly come toward her, she was conscious of a certain trepidation. Mr. Longstaff drew near; at last, he was close to her; he stopped

and stood looking at her. She had averted her head, so as not to appear to expect him; but now she looked round again, and he very gravely lifted his hat.

"May I take the liberty of sitting down?" he asked.

Agatha bowed in silence, and, to make room for him, moved a blue shawl of Diana's, which was lying on the bench; he slowly sank into the place and then said very gently:

"I have ventured to speak to you, because I have something particular to say." His voice trembled and he was extremely pale. His eyes, which Agatha thought very handsome, had a remarkable expression.

"I am afraid you are ill," she said, with great kindness. "I have often noticed you and pitied you."

"I thought you did, a little," the young man answered. "That is why I made up my mind to speak to you."

"You are getting worse," said Agatha, softly.

"Yes, I am getting worse; I am dying. I am perfectly conscious of it; I have no illusions. I am weaker every day; I shall last but a few weeks." This was said very simply; sadly but not lugubriously.

But Agatha felt almost awe-stricken; there stirred

in her heart a delicate sense of sisterhood with this beautiful young man who sat there and talked thus submissively of death.

"Can nothing be done?" she said.

He shook his head and smiled a little. "Nothing but to try and get what pleasure I can from this little remnant of life."

Though he smiled she felt that he was very serious; that he was, indeed, deeply agitated, and trying to master his emotion.

"I am afraid you get very little pleasure," Agatha rejoined. "You seem entirely alone."

"I am entirely alone. I have no family,—no near relations. I am absolutely alone."

Agatha rested her eyes on him compassionately, and then——

"You ought to have spoken to *us*," she said.

He sat looking at her; he had taken off his hat; he was slowly passing his hand over his forehead. "You see I do—at last!"

"You wanted to before?"

"Very often."

"I thought so!" said Agatha, with a candor which was in itself a dignity.

"But I couldn't," said Mr. Longstaff. "I never saw you alone."

Before she knew it Agatha was blushing a little; for, to the ear, simply, his words implied that it

was to her only he would appeal for the pleasure he had coveted. But the next instant she had become conscious that what he meant was simply that he admired her companion so much that he was afraid of her, and that, daring to speak to herself, he thought her a much smaller and less interesting personage. Her blush immediately faded; for there was no resentment to keep the color in her cheek; and there was no resentment still when she perceived that, though her neighbor was looking straight at her, with his inspired, expanded eyes, he was thinking too much of Diana to have noticed this little play of confusion.

"Yes, it's very true," she said. "It is the first time my friend has left me."

"She is very beautiful," said Mr. Longstaff.

"Very beautiful,—and as good as she is beautiful."

"Yes, yes," he rejoined, solemnly. "I am sure of that. I *know* it!"

"I know it even better than you," said Agatha, smiling a little.

"Then you will have all the more patience with what I want to say to you. It is very strange; it will make you think, at first, that I am perhaps out of my mind. But I am not; I am thoroughly reasonable. You will see." Then he paused a moment; his voice had begun to tremble again.

"I know what you are going to say," said Agatha, very gently. "You are in love with my friend."

Mr. Longstaff gave her a look of devoted gratitude; he lifted up the edge of the blue shawl, which he had often seen Diana wear, and pressed it to his lips.

"I am extremely grateful!" he exclaimed. "You don't think me crazy, then?"

"If you are crazy, there have been a great many madmen!" said Agatha.

"Of course there have been a great many. I have said that to myself, and it has helped me. They have gained nothing but the pleasure of their love, and I therefore, in gaining nothing and having nothing, am not worse off than the rest. But they had more than I, didn't they? You see I have had absolutely nothing,—not even a glance," he went on. "I have never even seen her look at me. I have not only never spoken to her, but I have never been near enough to speak to her. This is all I have ever had,—to lay my hand on something she has worn! and yet for the past month I have thought of her night and day. Sitting over there, a hundred rods away, simply because she was sitting in this place, in the same sunshine, looking out on the same sea: that was happiness enough for me. I am dying, but for the last five weeks that has kept me alive. It was for that I got up every day and came

out here; but for that, I should have staid at home and never have got up again. I have never sought to be presented to her, because I didn't wish to trouble her for nothing. It seemed to me it would be an impertinence to tell her of my admiration. I have nothing to offer her,—I am but the shadow of a living man, and if I were to say to her, 'Madam, I love you,' she could only answer, "Well, sir, what then?' Nothing—nothing! To speak to her of what I felt seemed only to open the lid of a grave in her face. It was more delicate not to do that; so I kept my distance and said nothing. Even this, as I say, has been a happiness, but it has been a happiness that has tired me out. This is the last of it. I must give up and make an end!" And he stopped, panting a little and apparently exhausted with his eloquence.

Agatha had always heard of love at first sight; she had read of it in poems and romances, but she had never been so near to it as this. It seemed to her most beautiful, and she believed in it devoutly. It made Mr. Longstaff brilliantly interesting; it cast a glory over the details of his face and person, and the pleading inflections of his voice. The little English ladies had been right; he was certainly a perfect gentleman. She could trust him.

"Perhaps if you stay at home awhile you will get better," she said, soothingly.

Her tone seemed to him such an indication that she accepted the propriety and naturalness of his passion that he put out his hand and for an instant laid it on her own.

"I knew you were reasonable—I knew I could talk to you. But I shall not get well. All the great doctors say so, and I believe them. If the passionate desire to get well for a particular purpose could work a miracle and cure a mortal disease, I should have seen the miracle two months ago. To get well and have a right to speak to your friend—that was my passionate desire. But I am worse than ever; I am very weak and I shall not be able to come out any more. It seemed to me to-day that I should never see you again, and yet I wanted so much to be able to tell you this! It made me very unhappy. What a wonderful chance it is that she went away! I must be grateful! if heaven doesn't grant my great prayers it grants my small ones. I beg you to render me this service. Tell her what I have told you. Not now—not till I am gone. Don't trouble her with it while I am in life. Please promise me that. But when I am dead it will seem less importunate, because then you can speak of me in the past. It will be like a story. My servant will come and tell you. Then say to her—'You were his last thought, and it was his last wish that you should know it.'" He slowly got up and put out his hand;

his servant, who had been standing at a distance, came forward with obsequious solemnity, as if it were part of his duty to adapt his deportment to the tone of his master's conversation. Agatha Gosling took the young man's hand and he stood and looked at her a moment longer. She too had risen to her feet; she was much impressed.

"You won't tell her until *after*——?" he said pleadingly. She shook her head. "And then you will tell her, faithfully?" She nodded, he pressed her hand, and then, having raised his hat, he took his servant's arm and slowly moved away.

Agatha kept her word; she said nothing to Diana about her interview. The young Americans came out and sat upon the shore the next day, and the next, and the next, and Agatha watched intently for Mr. Longstaff's re-appearance. But she watched in vain; day after day he was absent, and his absence confirmed his sad prediction. She thought all this a wonderful thing to happen to a woman, and as she glanced askance at her beautiful companion, she was almost irritated at seeing her sit there so careless and serene, while a poor young man was dying, as one might say, of love for her. At moments she wondered whether, in spite of her promise, it was not her Christian duty to tell Diana his story and give her the chance to go to him. But it occurred to Agatha, who knew very well that her companion

had a certain stately pride in which she herself was lacking, that even if she were told of his condition Diana might decline to do anything; and this she felt to be a most painful contingency. Besides, she had promised, and she always kept her promises. But her thoughts were constantly with Mr. Longstaff, and the romance of the affair. This made her melancholy and she talked much less than usual. Suddenly she was aroused from a reverie by hearing Diana express a careless curiosity as to what had become of the solitary young man who used to sit on the neighboring bench and do them the honor to stare at them.

For almost the first time in her life, Agatha Gosling deliberately dissembled.

"He has either gone away, or he has taken to his bed. I believe he is dying alone, in some wretched mercenary lodging."

"I prefer to believe something more cheerful," said Diana. "I believe he is gone to Paris and is eating a beautiful dinner at the Trois Frères Provençaux."

Agatha for a moment said nothing; and then——

"I don't think you care what becomes of him," she ventured to observe.

"My dear child, why should I care?" Diana demanded.

And Agatha Gosling was forced to admit that there really was no particular reason. But the event contradicted her. Three days afterward she took a long drive with her friend, from which they returned only as dusk was closing in. As they descended from the carriage at the door of their lodging she observed a figure standing in the street, slightly apart, which even in the early darkness had an air of familiarity. A second glance assured her that Mr. Longstaff's servant was hovering there in the hope of catching her attention. She immediately determined to give him a liberal measure of it. Diana left the vehicle and passed into the house, while the coachman fortunately asked for orders for the morrow. Agatha briefly gave such as were necessary, and then, before going in, turned to the hovering figure. It approached on tiptoe, hat in hand, and shaking its head very sadly. The old man wore an air of animated affliction which indicated that Mr. Longstaff was a generous master, and he proceeded to address Miss Gosling in that macaronic French which is usually at the command of Italian domestics who have seen the world.

"I stole away from my dear gentleman's bedside on purpose to have ten words with you. The old woman at the fruit-stall opposite told me that you had gone to drive, so I waited; but it seemed to me a thousand years till you returned!"

"But you have not left your master alone?" said Agatha.

"He has two Sisters of Charity—heaven reward them! They watch with him night and day. He is very low, *pauvre cher homme!*" And the old man looked at his interlocutress with that clear, human, sympathetic glance with which Italians of all classes bridge over the social gulf. Agatha felt that he knew his master's secret, and that she might discuss it with him freely.

"Is he dying?" she asked.

"That's the question, dear lady! He is very low. The doctors have given him up; but the doctors don't know his malady. They have felt his dear body all over, they have sounded his lungs, and looked at his tongue and counted his pulse; they know what he eats and drinks—it's soon told! But they haven't seen his *mind,* dear lady. I have; and so far I'm a better doctor than they. I know his secret—I know that he loves the beautiful girl above!" and the old man pointed to the upper windows of the house.

"Has your master taken you into his confidence?" Agatha demanded.

He hesitated a moment; then shaking his head a little and laying his hand on his heart——

"Ah, dear lady," he said, "the point is whether I have taken him into mine. I have not, I confess; he is too far gone. But I have determined to

be his doctor and to try a remedy the others have never thought of. Will you help me?"

"If I can," said Agatha. "What is your remedy?"

The old man pointed to the upper windows of the house again.

"Your lovely friend! Bring her to his bedside."

"If he is dying," said Agatha, "how would that help him?"

"He's dying for want of it. That's my idea at least, and I think it's worth trying. If a young man loves a beautiful woman, and, having never so much as touched the tip of her glove, falls into a mortal illness and wastes away, it requires no great wit to see that his illness doesn't come from his having indulged himself too grossly. It comes rather from the opposite cause! If he sinks when she's away, perhaps he'll come up when she's there. At any rate, that's my theory; and any theory is good that will save a dying man. Let the Diana come and stand a moment by his bed, and lay her hand upon his. We shall see what happens. If he gets well, it's worth while; if he doesn't, there is no harm done. A young lady risks nothing in going to see a poor gentleman who lies in a stupor between two holy women."

Agatha was much impressed with this picturesque reasoning, but she answered that it was quite impossible that her beautiful friend should go upon

this pious errand without a special invitation from Mr. Longstaff. Even should he beg Diana to come to him Agatha was by no means sure her companion would go; but it was very certain she would not take such an extraordinary step at the mere suggestion of a servant.

"But you, dear lady, have the happiness not to be a servant," the old man rejoined. "Let the suggestion be yours."

"From me it could come with no force, for what am I supposed to know about your poor master?"

"You have not told the Diana what he told you the other day?"

Agatha answered this question by another question.

"Did he tell you what he had told me?"

The old man tapped his forehead an instant and smiled.

"A good servant, you know, dear lady, needs never to be told things! If you have not repeated my master's words to your beautiful friend, I beg you most earnestly to do so. I am afraid she is rather cold."

Agatha glanced a moment at the upper windows and then she gave a silent nod. She wondered greatly to find herself discussing Diana's character with this aged menial; but the situation was so strange and romantic that one's old landmarks of

propriety were quite obliterated, and it seemed natural that a *valet de chambre* shoud be as frank and familiar as a servant in an old-fashioned comedy.

"If it is necessary that my dear master shall send for the young lady," Mr. Longstaff's domestic resumed, "I think I can promise you that he will! Let me urge you, meanwhile, to talk to her! If she is cold, melt her down. Prepare her to find him very interesting. If you could see him, poor gentleman, lying there as still and handsome as if he were his own monument in a *campo santo,* I think he would interest you."

This seemed to Agatha a very touching image, but she came to a sense that her interview with Mr. Longstaff's representative, now unduly prolonged, was assuming a nocturnal character. She abruptly brought it to a close, after having assured her interlocutor that she would reflect upon what he had told her, and she rejoined her companion in the deepest agitation. Late that evening her agitation broke out. She went into Diana's room, where she found this young lady standing white-robed before her mirror, with her auburn tresses rippling down to her knees; and then, taking her two hands, she told the story of the young Englishman's passion, told of his coming to talk to her that day that Diana had left her alone on the bench by the sea, and of

his venerable valet having, a couple of hours before, sought speech of her on the same subject. Diana listened, at first with a rosy flush, and then with a cold, an almost cruel, frown.

"Take pity upon him," said Agatha Gosling,—"take pity on him and go and see him."

"I don't understand," said her companion, "and it seems to me very disagreeable. What is Mr. Longstaff to me?" But before they separated, Agatha had persuaded her to say that if a message really should come from the young man's death-bed, she would not refuse him the light of her presence.

The message really came, brought of course by the invalid's zealous chamberlain. He re-appeared on the morrow, announcing that his master very humbly begged for the honor of ten minutes' conversation with the two ladies. They consented to follow him, and he led the way to Mr. Longstaff's apartments. Diana still wore her cloudy brow, but it made her look terribly handsome. Under the old man's guidance they passed through a low green door in a yellow wall, across a tangled garden full of orange-trees and winter roses, and into a white-wainscoted saloon, where they were presently left alone before a great classic, Empire clock, perched upon a frigid southern chimney-piece. They waited, however, but a few moments; the door of an adjoining room opened and the Sisters of Charity,

in white-winged hoods and with their hands thrust into the loose sleeves of the opposite arm, came forth and stood with downcast eyes on either side of the threshold. Then the old servant appeared between them and beckoned to the two young girls to advance. The latter complied with a certain hesitation, and he led them into the chamber of the dying man. Here, pointing to the bed, he silently left them and withdrew; not closing, however, the door of communication of the saloon, where he took up his station with the Sisters of Charity.

Diana and her companion stood together in the middle of the darker room, waiting for an invitation to approach their summoner. He lay in his bed, propped up on pillows, with his arms outside the counterpane. For a moment he simply gazed at them; he was as white as the sheet that covered him, and he certainly looked like a dying man. But he had the strength to bend forward and to speak in a soft, distinct voice.

"Would you be so kind," said Mr. Longstaff, "as to come nearer?"

Agatha Gosling gently pushed her friend forward, but she followed her to the bedside. Diana stood there, her frown had melted away; and the young man sank back upon his pillows and looked at her. A faint color came into his face, and he clasped his two hands together on his breast. For

some moments he simply gazed at the beautiful girl before him. It was an awkward situation for her, and Agatha expected her at any moment to turn away in disgust. But, slowly, her look of proud compulsion, of mechanical compliance, was exchanged for something more patient and pitying. The young Englishman's face expressed a kind of spiritual ecstasy which, it was impossible not to feel, gave a peculiar sanctity to the occasion.

"It was very generous of you to come," he said at last. "I hardly ventured to hope you would. I suppose you know—I suppose your friend, who listened to me so kindly, has told you."

"Yes, she knows," murmured Agatha—"she knows."

"I did not intend you should know until after my death," he went on; "but,"—and he paused a moment and shook his clasped hands together,—"I couldn't wait! And when I felt that I couldn't wait, a new idea, a new desire, came into my mind." He was silent again for an instant, still looking with worshipful entreaty at Diana. The color in his face deepened. "It is something that you may do for me. You will think it a most extraordinary request; but, in my position, a man grows bold. Dear lady, will you marry me?"

"Oh, dear!" cried Agatha Gosling, just audibly. Her companion said nothing. Her attitude seemed

to say that in this remarkable situation, one thing was no more surprising than another. But she paid Mr. Longstaff's proposal the respect of slowly seating herself in a chair which had been placed near his bed; here she rested in maidenly majesty, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"It will help me to die happy, since die I must!" the young man continued. "It will enable me to do something for you—the only thing I can do. I have property,—lands, houses, a great many beautiful things,—things I have loved, and am very sorry to be leaving behind me. Lying here helpless and hopeless through so many days, the thought has come to me of what a bliss it would be to know that they would rest in your hands. If you were my wife, they would rest there safely. You might be spared much annoyance; and it is not only that. It is a fancy I have beyond that. It would be the feeling of it! I am fond of life. I don't want to die; but since I must die, it would be a happiness to have got just this out of life—this joining of our hands before a priest. You could go away then. For you it would make no change—it would be no burden. But I should have a few hours in which to lie and think of my happiness."

There was something in the young man's tone so simple and sincere, so tender and urgent, that Agatha Gosling was touched to tears. She turned

away to hide them, and went on tiptoe to the window, where she wept silently. Diana apparently was not unmoved. She raised her eyes, and let them rest kindly on those of Mr. Longstaff, who continued softly to urge his proposal. "It would be a great charity," he said, "a great condescension; and it can produce no consequence to you that you could regret. It can only give you a larger liberty. You know very little about me, but I have a feeling that, so far as belief goes, you can believe me, and that is all I ask of you. I don't ask you to love me,—that takes time. It is something I cannot pretend to. It is only to consent to the form, the ceremony. I have seen the English clergyman; he says he will perform it. He will tell you, besides, all about me, —that I am an English gentleman, and that the name I offer you is one of the best in the world."

It was strange to hear a dying man lie there and argue his point in this categorical fashion; but now, apparently, his argument was finished. There was a deep silence, and Agatha thought it would be delicate on her own part to retire. She moved quietly into the adjoining room, where the two Sisters of Charity still stood with their hands in their sleeves, and the old Italian *valet* was taking snuff with a melancholy gesture, like a perplexed diplomatist. Agatha turned her back to these people, and, approaching a window again, stood looking

out into the garden upon the orange-trees and the winter roses. It seemed to her that she had been listening to the most beautiful, most romantic, and most eloquent of declarations. How could Diana be insensible to it? She earnestly hoped her companion would consent to the solemn and interesting ceremony proposed by Mr. Longstaff, and though her delicacy had prompted her to withdraw, it permitted her to listen eagerly to what Diana would say. Then (as she heard nothing) it was eclipsed by the desire to go back and whisper, with a sympathetic kiss, a word of counsel. She glanced round again at the Sisters of Charity, who appeared to have perceived that the moment was one of suspense. One of them detached herself, and, as Agatha returned, followed her a few steps into the room. Diana had got up from her chair. She was looking about her uneasily. She grasped at Agatha's hand. Reginald Longstaff lay there with his wasted face and his brilliant eyes, looking at them both. Agatha took her friend's two hands in both her own.

"It is very little to do, dearest," she murmured, "and it will make him very happy."

The young man appeared to have heard her, and he repeated her words in a tone of intense entreaty.

"It is very little to do, dearest."

Diana looked round at him an instant. Then, for

an instant, she covered her face with her two hands. Removing them, but holding them still against her cheeks, she looked at her companion with eyes that Agatha always remembered—eyes through which a thin gleam of mockery flashed from the seriousness of her face.

"Suppose, after all, he should get well?" she murmured.

Longstaff heard it; he gave a long, soft moan, and turned away. The Sister immediately approached his bed, on the other side, dropped on her knees and bent over him, while he leaned his head against the great white cape along which her crucifix depended. Diana stood a moment longer, looking at him; then, gathering her shawl together with a great dignity, she slowly walked out of the room. Agatha could do nothing but follow her. The old Italian, holding the door open for them to pass out, made them an exaggerated obeisance.

In the garden Diana paused, with a flush in her cheek, and said,

"If he could die with it, he could die without it!" But beyond the garden gate, in the empty sunny street, she suddenly burst into tears.

Agatha made no reproaches, no comments; but her companion, during the rest of the day, spoke of Mr. Longstaff several times with an almost passionate indignation. She pronounced his conduct

indelicate, egotistic, impertinent; she declared that she had found the scene most revolting. Agatha, for the moment, remained silent, but the next day she attempted to suggest something in apology for the poor young man. Then Diana, with great emphasis, begged her to be so good as never to mention his name again; and she added that he had put her completely out of humor with Nice, from which place they would immediately take their departure. This they did without delay; they began to travel again. Agatha heard no more of Reginald Longstaff; the English ladies who had been her original source of information with regard to him had now left Nice; otherwise she would have written to them for news. That is, she would have thought of writing to them; I suspect that, on the whole, she would have denied herself this satisfaction, on the ground of loyalty to her friend. Agatha, at any rate, could only drop a tear, at solitary hours, upon the young man's unanswered prayer and early death. It must be confessed, however, that sometimes, as the weeks elapsed, a certain faint displeasure mingled itself with her sympathy—a wish that, roughly speaking, poor Mr. Longstaff had left them alone. Since that strange interview at his bedside things had not gone well; the charm of their earlier contentment seemed broken. Agatha said to herself that, really, if she were superstitious, she might fancy that Diana's

conduct on this occasion had brought them under an evil charm. It was no superstition, certainly, to think that this young lady had lost a certain evenness of temper. She was impatient, absent-minded, indifferent, capricious. She expressed unaccountable opinions and proposed unnatural plans. It is true that disagreeable things were constantly happening to them—things which would have taxed the most unruffled spirit. Their post-horses broke down, their postilions were impertinent, their luggage went astray, their servants betrayed them. The heavens themselves seemed to join in the conspiracy, and for days together were dark and ungenerous, treating them only to wailing winds and watery clouds. It was, in a large measure, in the light of after years that Agatha judged this period, but even at the time she felt it to be depressing, uncomfortable, unnatural. Diana apparently shared this feeling, though she never openly avowed it. She took refuge in a kind of haughty silence, and whenever a new *contretemps* came to her knowledge, she simply greeted it with a bitter smile which Agatha always interpreted as an ironical reflection on poor, fantastic, obtrusive Mr. Longstaff, who, through some mysterious action upon the machinery of nature, had turned the tide of their fortunes. At the end of the summer, suddenly, Diana proposed they should go home, in the tone of a person who gives

up a hopeless struggle. Agatha assented, and the two ladies returned to America, much to the relief of Miss Gosling, who had an uncomfortable sense that there was something unexpressed and unregulated between them, which gave their conversation a resemblance to a sultry morning. But at home they separated very tenderly, for Agatha had to go and devote herself to her nearer kinsfolk in the country. These good people after her long absence were exacting, so that for two years she saw nothing of her late companion.

She often, however, heard from her, and Diana figured in the town gossip that was occasionally wafted to her rural home. She sometimes figured strangely—as a rattling coquette, who carried on flirtations by the hundred and broke hearts by the dozen. This had not been Diana's former character and Agatha found matter for meditation in the change. But the young lady's own letters said little of her admirers and displayed no trophies. They came very fitfully—sometimes at the rate of a dozen a month and sometimes not at all; but they were usually of a serious and abstract cast and contained the author's opinions upon life, death, religion and immortality. Mistress of her actions and of a pretty fortune, it might have been expected that news would come in trustworthy form of Diana's at last accepting one of her rumored lovers.

Such news in fact came, and it was apparently trustworthy, inasmuch as it proceeded from the young lady herself. She wrote to Agatha that she was to be married, and Agatha immediately congratulated her upon her happiness. Then Diana wrote back that though she was to be married she was not at all happy; and she shortly afterward added that she had broken off her projected union and that her felicity was smaller than ever. Poor Agatha was sorely perplexed and found it a comfort that a month after this her friend should have sent her a peremptory summons to come to her. She immediately obeyed. Arriving, after a long journey, at the dwelling of her young hostess, she saw Diana at the farther end of the drawing-room, with her back turned, looking out of the window. She was evidently watching for Agatha, but Miss Gosling had come in, by accident, through a private entrance which was not visible from the window. She gently approached her friend and then Diana turned. She had her two hands laid upon her cheeks and her eyes were sad; her face and attitude suggested something that Agatha had seen before and kept the memory of. While she kissed her Agatha remembered that it was just so she had stood for that last moment before poor Mr. Longstaff.

"Will you come abroad with me again?" Diana asked. "I am very ill."

"Dearest, what is the matter?" said Agatha.

"I don't know; I believe I am dying. They tell me this place is bad for me; that I must have another climate; that I must move about. Will you take care of me? I shall be very easy to take care of now."

Agatha, for all answer, embraced her afresh, and as soon after this as possible the two friends embarked again for Europe. Miss Gosling had lent herself the more freely to this scheme as her companion's appearance seemed a striking confirmation of her words. Not, indeed, that she looked as if she were dying, but in the two years that had elapsed since their separation she had wasted and faded. She looked more than two years older and the brilliancy of her beauty was dimmed. She was pale and languid, and she moved more slowly than when she seemed a goddess treading the forest leaves. The beautiful statue had grown human and taken on some of the imperfections of humanity. And yet the doctors by no means affirmed that she had a mortal malady, and when one of them was asked by an inquisitive matron why he had recommended this young lady to cross the seas, he replied with a smile that it was a principle in his system to prescribe the remedies that his patients acutely desired.

At present the fair travelers had no misadven-

tures. The broken charm had removed itself; the heavens smiled upon them and their postilions treated them like princesses. Diana, too, had completely recovered her native placidity; she was the gentlest, the most docile, the most reasonable of women. She was silent and subdued as was natural in an invalid, though in one important particular her demeanor was certainly at variance with the idea of debility. She relished movement much more than rest, and constant change of place became the law of her days. She wished to see all the places that she had not seen before, and all the old ones over again.

"If I am really dying," she said, smiling softly. "I must leave my farewell cards everywhere." So she lived in a great open carriage, leaning back in it and looking, right and left, at everything she passed. On her former journey to Europe she had seen but little of England, and now she would visit the whole of this famous island. So she rolled for weeks through the beautiful English landscape, past meadows and hedge-rows, over the avenues of great estates and under the walls of castles and abbeys. For the English parks and manors, the "Halls" and "Courts," she had an especial admiration, and into the grounds of such as were open to appreciative tourists she made a point of penetrating. Here she stayed her carriage beneath the oaks and beeches,

and sat for an hour at a time listening to nightingales and watching browsing deer. She never failed to visit a residence that lay on her road, and as soon as she arrived at a place she inquired punctiliously whether there were any fine country-seats in the neighborhood. In this fashion she spent a whole summer. Through the autumn she continued to wander restlessly; she visited, on the Continent, a hundred watering-places and travelers' resorts. The beginning of the winter found her in Rome, where she confessed to extreme fatigue and determined to seek repose.

"I am weary, weary," she said to her companion. "I didn't know how weary I was. I feel like sinking down in this City of Rest, and resting here forever."

She took a lodging in an old palace, where her chamber was hung with ancient tapestries, and her drawing-room decorated with the arms of a pope. Here, giving way to her fatigue, she ceased to wander. The only thing she did was to go every day to St. Peter's. She went nowhere else. She sat at her window all day with a big book in her lap, which she never read, looking out into a Roman garden at a fountain plashing into a weedy alcove, and half a dozen nymphs in mottled marble. Sometimes she told her companion that she was happier this way than she had ever been,—in this way, and

in going to St. Peter's. In the great church she often spent the whole afternoon. She had a servant behind her, carrying a stool. He placed her stool against a marble pilaster, and she sat there for a long time, looking up into the airy hollow of the dome and over the peopled pavement. She noticed every one who passed her, but Agatha, lingering beside her, felt less at liberty, she hardly knew why, to murmur a sportive commentary on the people about them than she had felt when they sat upon the shore at Nice.

One day Agatha left her and strolled about the church by herself. The ecclesiastical life of Rome had not shrunken to its present smallness, and in one corner or another of St. Peter's, there was always some point of worship. Agatha found entertainment, and was absent for half an hour. When she came back, she found her companion's place deserted, and she sat down on the empty stool to await her re-appearance. Some time elapsed and she wandered away in quest of her. She found her at last, near one of the side-altars; but she was not alone. A gentleman stood before her whom she appeared just to have encountered. Her face was very pale, and its expression led Agatha to look straightway at the stranger. Then she saw he was no stranger; he was Reginald Longstaff! He, too, evidently had been much startled, but he was al-

ready recovering himself. He stood very gravely an instant longer; then he silently bowed to the two ladies and turned away.

Agatha felt at first as if she had seen a ghost; but the impression was immediately corrected by the fact that Mr. Longstaff's aspect was very much less ghostly than it had been in life. He looked like a strong man; he held himself upright and had a flush of color. What Agatha saw in Diana's face was not surprise; it was a pale radiance which she waited a moment to give a name to. Diana put out her hand and laid it in her arm, and her touch helped Agatha to know what it was that her face expressed. Then she felt too that this knowledge itself was not a surprise; she seemed to have been waiting for it. She looked at her friend again and Diana was beautiful. Diana blushed and became more beautiful yet. Agatha led her back to her seat near the marble pilaster.

"So you were right," Agatha said presently. "He would, after all, have got well."

Diana would not sit down; she motioned to her servant to bring away the stool, and continued to move toward the door. She said nothing until she stood without, in the great square of the colonnades and fountains. Then she spoke:

"I am right now, but I was wrong then. He got

well because I refused him. I gave him a hurt that cured him."

That evening, beneath the Roman lamps, in the great drawing-room of the arms of the pope, a remarkable conversation took place between the two friends. Diana wept and hid her face; but her tears and her shame were gratuitous. Agatha felt, as I have said, that she had already guessed all the unexplained, and it was needless for her companion to tell her that three weeks after she had refused Reginald Longstaff she insanely loved him. It was needless that Diana should confess that his image had never been out of her mind, that she believed he was still among the living, and that she had come back to Europe with a desperate hope of meeting him. It was in this hope that she had wandered from town to town, and noticed all the passers; and it was in this hope that she had lingered in so many English parks. She knew her love was very strange; she could only say it had consumed her. It had all come upon her afterward,—in retrospect, in meditation. Or rather, she supposed, it had been there always since she first saw him, and the revulsion from displeasure to pity, after she left his bedside, had brought it out. And with it came the faith that he had indeed got well, both of his malady and of his own passion. This was her punishment! And then she spoke with a divine simplicity which

Agatha, weeping a little too, wished that, if this possibility were a fact, the young man might have heard. "I am so glad he is well and strong. And that he looks so handsome and so good!" And she presently added, "Of course he has got well only to hate me. He wishes never to see me again. Very good. I have had my wish; I have seen him once more. That was what I wanted and I can die content."

It seemed, in fact, as if she were going to die. She went no more to St. Peter's, and exposed herself to no more encounters with Mr. Longstaff. She sat at her window and looked out at the mottled dryads and the cypresses, or wandered about her quarter of the palace with a vaguely smiling resignation. Agatha watched her with a sadness that was less submissive. This too was something that she had heard of, that she had read of in poetry and fable, but that she had never supposed she should see;—her companion was dying of love! Agatha pondered many things and resolved upon several. The first of these latter was sending for the doctor. This personage came, and Diana let him look at her through his spectacles, and hold her white wrist. He announced that she was ill, and she smiled and said she knew it; and then he gave her a little phial of gold-colored fluid, which he bade her to drink. He recommended her to re-

main in Rome, as the climate exactly suited her complaint. Agatha's second desire was to see Mr. Longstaff, who had appealed to her, she reflected, in the day of his own tribulation, and whom she therefore had a right to approach at present. She disbelieved, too, that the passion which led him to take that extraordinary step at Nice was extinct; such passions as that never died. If he had made no further attempt to see Diana it was because he believed that she was still as cold as when she turned away from his death-bed. It must be added, moreover, that Agatha felt a lawful curiosity to learn how from that death-bed he had risen again into blooming manhood.

On this last point, all elucidation left something unexplained. Agatha went to St. Peter's, feeling sure that sooner or later she should encounter him there. At the end of a week she perceived him, and seeing her, he immediately came and spoke to her. As Diana had said, he was now extremely handsome, and he looked particularly good. He was a blooming, gallant, quiet, young English gentleman. He seemed much embarrassed, but his manner to Agatha expressed the highest consideration.

"You must think me a dreadful imposter," he said, very gravely. "But I *was* dying,—or I believed I was."

"And by what miracle did you recover?"

He was silent a moment, and then he said:

"I suppose it was by the miracle of wounded pride!" Then she noticed that he asked nothing about Diana; and presently she felt that he knew she was thinking of this. "The strangest part of it," he added, "was that when I came back to strength, what had gone before had become as a simple dream. And what happened to me here the other day," he went on, "failed to make it a reality again!"

Agatha looked at him a moment in silence, and saw again that he was handsome and kind; and then dropping a sigh over the wonderful mystery of things, she turned sadly away. That evening, Diana said to her:

"I know that you have seen him!"

Agatha came to her and kissed her.

"And I am nothing to him now?"

"My own dearest——" murmured Agatha.

Diana had drunk the little phial of gold-colored liquid; but after this, she ceased to wander about the palace; she never left her room. The old doctor was with her constantly now, and he continued to say that the air of Rome was very good for her complaint. Agatha watched her in helpless sadness; she saw her fading and sinking, and yet she was unable to comfort her. She tried it once in

saying hard things about Mr. Longstaff, in pointing out that he had not been honorable; rising herein to a sublime hypocrisy, for, on that last occasion at St. Peter's, the poor girl had felt a renewed personal admiration,—the quickening of a private flame; she saw nothing but his good looks and his kind manner.

"What did he want—what did he mean, after all?" she ingenuously murmured, leaning over Diana's sofa. "Why should he have been wounded at what you said? It would have been part of the bargain that he should not get well. Did he mean to take an unfair advantage—to make you his wife under false pretenses? When you put your finger on the weak spot, why should he resent it? No, it was not honorable."

Diana smiled sadly; she had no false shame now, and she spoke of this thing as if it concerned another person.

"He would have counted on my forgiving him!" she said. A little while after this, she began to sink more rapidly. Then she called her friend to her, and said simply: "Send for him!" And as Agatha looked perplexed and distressed, she added, "I know he is still in Rome."

Agatha at first was at a loss where to find him, but among the benefits of the papal dispensation was the fact that the pontifical police could in-

stantly help you to lay your hand upon any sojourner in the Eternal City. Mr. Longstaff had a passport in detention by the government, and this document formed a basis of instruction to the servant whom Agatha sent to investigate the authorities. The servant came back with the news that he had seen the distinguished stranger, who would wait upon the ladies at the hour they had proposed. When this hour came and Mr. Longstaff was announced, Diana said to her companion that she must remain with her. It was an afternoon in spring; the high windows into the palace garden were open, and the room was filled with great sheaves and stocks of the abundant Roman flowers. Diana sat in a deep armchair.

It was certainly a difficult position for Reginald Longstaff. He stopped on the threshold and looked awhile at the woman to whom he had made his extraordinary offer; then, pale and agitated, he advanced rapidly toward her. He was evidently shocked at the state in which he found her; he took her hand, and, bending over it, raised it to his lips. She fixed her eyes on him a little, and she smiled a little.

"It is I who am dying now," she said. "And now I want to ask something of *you*—to ask what you asked of me."

He stared, and a deep flush of color came into

his face; he hesitated for an appreciable moment. Then lowering his head with a movement of assent he kissed her hand again.

"Come back to-morrow," she said; "that is all I ask of you."

He looked at her again for a while in silence; then he abruptly turned and left her. She sent for the English clergyman and told him that she was a dying woman, and that she wanted the marriage service read beside her couch. The clergyman, too, looked at her, marvelling; but he consented to humor so tenderly romantic a whim and made an appointment for the afternoon of the morrow. Diana was very tranquil. She sat motionless, with her hands clasped and her eyes closed. Agatha wandered about, arranging and re-arranging the flowers. On the morrow she encountered Mr. Longstaff in one of the outer rooms. He had come before his time. She made this objection to his being admitted; but he answered that he knew he was early and had come with intention; he wished to spend the intervening hour with his prospective bride. So he went in and sat down by her couch again, and Agatha, leaving them alone, never knew what passed between them. At the end of the hour the clergyman arrived, and read the marriage service to them, pronouncing the nuptial blessing, while Agatha stood by as witness. Mr. Longstaff went through all this

with a solemn, inscrutable face, and Agatha, observing him, said to herself that one must at least do him the justice to admit that he was performing punctiliously what honor demanded. When the clergyman had gone he asked Diana when he might see her again.

"Never!" she said, with her strange smile. And she added—"I shall not live long now."

He kissed her face, but he was obliged to leave her. He gave Agatha an anxious look as if he wished to say something to her, but she preferred not to listen to him. After this Diana sank rapidly. The next day, Reginald Longstaff came back and insisted upon seeing Agatha.

"Why should she die?" he asked. "I want her to live."

"Have you forgiven her?" said Agatha.

"She saved me!" he cried.

Diana consented to see him once more; there were two doctors in attendance now, and they also had consented. He knelt down beside her bed and asked her to live. But she feebly shook her head.

"It would be wrong of me," she said.

Later, when he came back once more, Agatha told him she was gone. He stood wondering, with tears in his eyes.

"I don't understand," he said. "Did she love me or not?"

"She loved you," said Agatha, "more than she believed you could now love her; and it seemed to her that, when she had had her moment of happiness, to leave you at liberty was the tenderest way she could show it!"

THÉODOLINDE

THÉODOLINDE

I HAD invited the excellent fellow to dinner, and had begun to wonder, the stroke of half-past six having sounded, why he did not present himself. At last I stepped out upon the balcony and looked along the street in the direction from which, presumably, he would approach. A Parisian thoroughfare is always an entertaining spectacle, and I had still much of a stranger's alertness of attention. Before long, therefore, I quite forgot my unpunctual guest in my relish of the multifarious animation of the brilliant city. It was a perfect evening toward the end of April; there was a charming golden glow on the opposite housetops, which looked toward the west; there was a sort of vernal odor in the street, mingling with the emanations of the restaurant across the way, whose door now always stood open; with the delightful aroma of the chocolate-shop which occupied the ground floor of the house in whose entresol I was lodged; and, as I

fancied, with certain luscious perfumes hovering about the brilliantly-polished window of the hair-dresser's establishment adjacent to the restaurant. Then there was a woman in a minutely-fluted cap selling violets in a little handcart, which she gently pushed along over the smooth asphalt, and which, as she passed, left a sensible trace in the thick mild air. All this made a thoroughly Parisian mixture, and I envied Sanguinetti the privilege of spending his life in a city in which even the humblest of one's senses was the medium of poetic impressions. There was poetry in the warm, succulent exhalations of the opposite restaurant, where, among the lighted lamps, I could see the little tables glittering with their glass and silver, the tenderly-brown rolls nestling in the petals of the folded napkins, the waiters in their snowy aprons standing in the various attitudes of imminent *empressement,* the agreeable *dame de comptoir* sitting idle for the moment and rubbing her plump white hands. To a person so inordinately fond of chocolate as myself—there was literally a pretty little box half emptied of large soft globules of the compound standing at that moment on my table, for all the world as if I had been a sweet-toothed school-girl—there was of course something very agreeable in the faint upward gusts of the establishment in my *rez-de-chaussée.* Presently, too, it appeared to me that the savors

peculiar to the hairdressing-shop had assumed an extraordinary intensity, and that my right-hand nostril was in the act of being titillated by what might fairly be called the very poetry of cosmetics. Glancing that way again, I perceived the source of this rich effluvium. The hairdresser's door was open, and a person whom I took to be his wife had come to inhale upon the threshold the lighter atmosphere of the street. She stood there for some moments looking up and down, and I had time to see that she was very pretty. She wore a plain black silk dress, and one needed to know no more of millinery than most men to observe that it was admirably fitted to a charming figure. She had a little knot of pink ribbon at her throat and a bunch of violets in her rounded bosom. Her face seemed to me at once beautiful and lively—two merits that are not always united; for smiles, I have observed, are infrequent with women who are either very ugly or very pretty. Her light-brown hair was, naturally enough, dressed with consummate art, and the character of her beauty being suggestive of purity and gentleness, she looked (her black silk dress apart) like a Madonna who should have been *coiffée* in the Rue de la Paix. What a delightful person for a barber's wife! I thought; and I saw her sitting in the little front shop at the desk and taking the money with a gracious smile from the gentlemen who had been

having their whiskers trimmed in the inner sanctuary. I touched my own whiskers, and straightway decided that they needed trimming. In a few moments this lovely woman stepped out upon the pavement, and strolled along in front of the shop-window on a little tour of inspection. She stood there a moment, looking at the brilliant array of brightly-capped flaçons, of ivory toilet-implements, of detached human tresses disposed in every variety of fashionable convolution: she inclined her head to one side and gently stroked her chin. I was able to perceive that even with her back turned she was hardly less pretty than when seen in front—her back had, as they say, so much *chic*. The inclination of her head denoted contentment, even complacency; and, indeed, well it might, for the window was most artistically arranged. Its principal glory was conferred by two waxen heads of lovely ladies, such as are usually seen in hairdressers' windows; and these wig-wearing puppets, which maintained a constant rotary movement, seemed to be a triumph of the modeller's art. One of the revolving ladies was dark, and the other fair, and each tossed back her head and thrust out her waxen bosom and parted her rosy lips in the most stylish manner conceivable. Several persons passing by had stopped to admire them. In a few moments a second inmate came to the door of the shop, and said a word to the bar-

ber's pretty wife. This was not the barber himself, but a young woman apparently employed in the shop. She was a nice-looking young woman enough, but she had by no means the beauty of her companion, who, to my regret, on hearing her voice instantly went in.

After this I fell to watching something else, I forget what: I had quite forgotten Sanguinetti. I think I was looking at a gentleman and lady who had come into the restaurant and placed themselves near the great sheet of plate glass which separated the interior from the street. The lady, who had the most wonderfully arched eyebrows, was evidently ordering the dinner, and I was struck with the profusion of its items. At last she began to eat her soup, with her little finger very much curled out, and then my gaze wandered toward the hairdresser's window again. This circumstance reminded me that I was really very good-natured to be waiting so placidly for that dilatory Sanguinetti. There he stood in front of the coiffeur's, staring as intently and serenely into the window as if he had the whole evening before him. I waited a few moments to give him a chance to move on, but he remained there rapt in contemplation. What in the world was he looking at? Had he spied something that could play a part in his collection? For Sanguinetti was a collector, and had a room full of old

crockery and uncomfortable chairs. But he cared for nothing that was not a hundred years old, and the pretty things in the hairdresser's window all bore the stamp of the latest Parisian manufacture —were part and parcel of that modern rubbish which he so cordially despised. What, then, had so forcibly arrested his attention? Was the poor fellow thinking of buying a new chignon or a solitary pendent curl for the object of his affections? This could hardly be, for to my almost certain knowledge his affections had no object save the faded crockery and the singular chairs I have mentioned. I had, indeed, more than once thought it a pity that he should not interest himself in some attractive little woman, for he might end by marrying her; and that would be a blessing, inasmuch as she would probably take measures for his being punctual when he was asked out to dinner. I tapped on the edge of the little railing which served as my window-guard, but the noise of the street prevented this admonition from reaching his ear. He was decidedly quite too absorbed. Then I ventured to hiss at him in the manner of the Latin races—a mode of address to which I have always had a lively aversion, but which, it must be confessed, proceeding from Latin lips, reaches its destination in cases in which a nobler volume of sound will stop halfway. Still, like the warrior's widow in Tennyson's song, he neither

spake nor moved. But here, suddenly, I comprehended the motive of his immobility: he was looking of course at the barber's beautiful wife, the pretty woman with the face of a Madonna and the coiffure of a duchess, whom I myself had just found so charming. This was really an excuse, and I felt disposed to allow him a few moments' grace. There was evidently an unobstructed space behind the window through which this attractive person could be perceived as she sat at her desk in some attitude of graceful diligence—adding up the items of a fine lady's little indebtedness for rouge-pots and rice-powder or braiding ever so neatly the long tresses of a *fausse natte* of the fashionable color. I promised myself to look out for this unobstructed space the very first time I should pass.

I gave my tarrying guest another five minutes' grace, during which the lamps were lighted in the hairdresser's shop. The window now became extremely brilliant; the ivory brushes and the little silver mirrors glittered and flashed; the colored cosmetics in the little toilet-bottles acquired an almost appetizing radiance; and the beautiful waxen ladies, tossing back their heads more than ever from their dazzling busts, seemed to sniff up the agreeable atmosphere. Of course the hairdresser's wife had become even more vividly visible, and so, evidently, Sanguinetti was finding out. He moved no more

than if he himself had been a barber's block. This was all very well, but now, seriously, I was hungry, and I felt extremely disposed to fling a flower-pot at him. I had an array of these ornaments in the balcony. Just then my servant came into the room; and beckoning to this functionary I pointed out to him the gentleman at the barber's window, and bade him go down into the street and interrupt Mr. Sanguinetti's contemplations. He departed, descended, and I presently saw him cross the way. Just as he drew near my friend, however, the latter turned round abruptly and looked at his watch. Then, with an obvious sense of alarm, he moved quickly forward, but he had not gone five steps before he paused again and cast back a supreme glance at the object of his admiration. He raised his hand to his lips, and, upon my word, he looked as if he was kissing it. My servant now accosted him with a bow, and motioned toward my balcony, but Sanguinetti, without looking up, simply passed quickly across to my door. He might well be shy about looking up—kissing his hand in the street to pretty *dames de comptoir:* for a modest little man, who was supposed to care for nothing but bric-à-brac, and not to be in the least what is called "enterprising" with women, this was certainly a very pretty jump. And the hairdresser's wife? Had she, on her side, been kissing her finger-tips to him?

I thought it very possible, and remembered that I had always heard that Paris is the city of gallantry.

Sanguinetti came in, blushing a good deal, and saying that he was extremely sorry to have kept me waiting.

"Oh," I answered, "I understand it very well. I have been watching you from my window for the last quarter of an hour."

He smiled a little, blushing still. "Though I have lived in Paris for fifteen years," he said, "you know I always look at the shops. One never knows what one may pick up."

"You have a taste," I said, "for picking up pretty faces. That is certainly a very pretty one at the hairdresser's."

Poor Sanguinetti was really very modest: my "chaff" discomposed him, and he began to fidget and protest.

"Oh!" I went on, "your choice does great honor to your taste. She's a very lovely creature: I admire her myself."

He looked at me a moment with his soup-spoon poised. He was always a little afraid of me: he was sure I thought him a very flimsy fellow, with his passion for cracked teacups and scraps of old brocade. But now he seemed a trifle reassured: he would talk a little if he dared. "You know there

are two of them," he said, "but one is much more beautiful than the other."

"Precisely," I answered—"the fair one."

"My dear friend," murmured my guest, "she is the most beautiful object I ever beheld."

"That, perhaps," I said, "is going a little too far. But she is uncommonly handsome."

"She is quite perfect," Sanguinetti declared, finishing his soup. And presently he added, "Shall I tell you what she looks like?"

"Like a fashionable angel," I said.

"Yes," he answered, smiling, "or like a Madonna who should have had her hair dressed—over there."

"My dear fellow," I said, "that is just the comparison I hit upon a while ago."

"That proves the truth of it. It is a real Madonna type."

"A little Parisianized," I rejoined, "about the corners of the mouth."

"Possibly," said Sanguinetti. "But the mouth is her loveliest feature."

"Could you see her well?" I inquired as I helped him to a sweetbread.

"Beautifully—especially after the gas was lighted."

"Had you never noticed her before?"

"Never, strangely enough. But though, as I say, I am very fond of shop-windows, I confess to al-

ways having had a great prejudice against those of the hairdressers."

"You see," I said, "how wrong you were."

"No, not in general: this is an exception. The women are usually hideous. They have the most impossible complexions: they are always fearfully sallow. There is one of them in my street, three doors from my own house: you would say she was made of——" And he paused a moment for his comparison. "You would say she was made of tallow."

We finished our sweetbreads, and, I think, talked of something else, my companion presently drawing from his pocket and exhibiting with some elation a little purchase in the antiquarian line which he had made that morning. It was a small coffee-cup of the Sèvres manufacture and of the period of Louis XV., very delicately painted over with nosegays and garlands. I was far from being competent in such matters, but Sanguinetti assured me that it bore a certain little earmark which made it a precious acquisition. And he put it back into its little red morocco case, and fell a-musing with his eyes wandering toward the window. He was fond of old gimcracks and knickknacks of every order and epoch, but he had, I knew, a special tenderness for the productions of the baser period of the French monarchy. His collection of snuff-boxes and flowered screens was

highly remarkable—might, I suppose, have been called celebrated. In spite of his very foreign name, he was a genuine compatriot of my own, and indeed our acquaintance had begun with our being, as very small boys, at school together. There was a tradition that Sanguinetti's grandfather had been an Italian image-vender in the days when those gentlemen might have claimed in America to be the only representatives of a care for the fine arts. In the early part of the century they were also less numerous than they have since become, and it was believed that the founder of the Transatlantic stock of the Sanguinettis had by virtue of his fine Italian eyes, his slouched hat, his earrings, his persuasive eloquence, his foreign idioms and his little tray of plaster effigies and busts been deemed a personage of sufficient importance to win the heart and hand of the daughter of a well-to-do attorney in the State of Vermont. This lady had brought her husband a property which he had invested in some less brittle department of the Italian trade, and, prospering as people, alas! prospered in those good old days, had bequeathed, much augmented, to the father of my guest. My companion, who had several sisters, was brought up like a little gentleman, and showed symptoms even at the earliest age of his mania for refuse furniture. At school he used to collect old slate-pencils and match-boxes: I suppose he inherited the

taste from his grandfather, who had perambulated the country with a tray covered with the most useless ornaments (like a magnified chess-board) upon his head. When he was twenty years old Sanguinetti lost his father and got his share of the patrimony, with which he immediately came to Europe, where he had lived these seventeen years. When I first saw him on coming to Paris, I asked him if he meant never to go back to New York, and I very well remember his answer: "My dear fellow" (in a very mournful tone), "what *can* you get there? The things are all second-rate, and during the Louis Quinze period, you know, our poor dear country was really—really——" And he shook his head very slowly and expressively.

I answered that there were (as I had been told) very good spinning-wheels and kitchen-settles, but he rejoined that he cared only for that which was truly elegant. He was a most simple-minded and amiable little bachelor, and would have done anything possible to oblige a friend, but he made no secret of his conviction that "pretty things" were the only things in the world worth troubling one's self about. He was very near-sighted, and was always putting up his glass to look at something on your chimney-piece or your side-table. He had a lingering, solemn way of talking about the height of Madame de Pompadour's heels and the different

shapes of old Dutch candlesticks; and though many of his fellow-country people thought him very "affected," he always seemed to me the least pretentious of men. He never read the newspapers for their politics, and didn't pretend to: he read them only for their lists of auction-sales. I had a great kindness for him, he seemed to me such a pure-minded mortal, sitting there in his innocent company of Dresden shepherdesses and beauties whose smiles were stippled on the lids of snuff-boxes. There is always something agreeable in a man who is a perfect example of a type; and Sanguinetti was all of one piece. He was the perfect authority upon pretty things.

He kept looking at the window, as I have said, and it required no great shrewdness to guess that his thoughts had stepped out of it and were hovering in front of the hairdresser's *étalage*. I was inclined to humor his enthusiasm, for it amused me to see a man who had hitherto found a pink-faced lady on a china plate a sufficiently substantial object of invocation, led captive by a charmer who would, as the phrase is, have something to say for herself.

"Shouldn't you like to have a closer view of her?" I asked with a sympathetic smile.

He glanced at me and blushed again: "That lovely creature?"

"That lovely creature. Shouldn't you have liked to get nearer?"

"Indeed I should. That sheet of plate-glass is a great vexation."

"But why didn't you make a pretext for going into the shop? You might have bought a tooth-brush."

"I don't know that I should have gained much," said Sanguinetti simply.

"You would have seen her move: her movement is charming."

"Her movement is—the poetry of motion. But I could see that outside."

"My dear fellow," I urged, "you are not enterprising enough. In your place I should get a footing in the shop."

He fixed his clear little near-sighted eyes upon me. "Yes, yes," he said, "it would certainly be delightful to be able to sit there and watch her: it would be more comfortable than standing outside."

"*Je crois bien!* But sitting there and watching her? You go rather far."

"I suppose I should be rather in the way. But every now and then she would turn her face toward me. And I don't know," he added, "but that she is as pretty behind as before."

"You make an observation that I made myself. She has so much *chic*."

Sanguinetti kissed his finger-tips with a movement that he had learned of his long Parisian sojourn. "The poetry of *chic*—— But I shall go further," he presently pursued. "I don't despair, I don't despair." And he paused with his hands in his pockets, tilting himself back in his seat.

"You don't despair of what?"

"Of making her my own."

I burst out laughing: "Your own, my dear fellow! You are more enterprising than I thought. But what do you mean? I don't suppose that under the circumstances you can marry her?"

"No: under the circumstances, unfortunately, I can't. But I can have her always there."

"Always where?"

"At home, in my room. It's just the place for her."

"Ah, my good friend," I rejoined, laughing, but slightly scandalized, "that's a matter of opinion."

"It's a matter of taste. I think it would suit her."

A matter of taste, indeed, this question of common morality! Sanguinetti was more Parisianized than I had supposed, and I reflected that Paris was certainly a very dangerous place, since it had got the better of his inveterate propriety. But I was not too much shocked to be still a good deal amused.

"Of course I shall not go too fast," he went on. "I shall not be too abrupt."

"Pray don't."

"I shall approach the matter gradually. I shall go into the shop several times to buy certain things. First a pot of cold cream, then a piece of soap, then a bottle of glycerine. I shall go into a great many ecstasies and express no end of admiration. Meanwhile, she will slowly move around, and every now and then she will look at me. And so, little by little, I will come to the great point."

"Perhaps you will not be listened to."

"I will make a very handsome offer."

"What sort of an offer do you mean?"

"I am ashamed to tell you: you will call it throwing away money."

An offer of money! He was really very crude. Should I too come to this if I continued to live in Paris? "Oh," I said, "if you think that money simply will do it——"

"Why, you don't suppose," he exclaimed, "that I expect to have her for nothing?" He was actually cynical, and I remained silent. "But I shall not be happy again—at least for a long time"—he went on, "unless I succeed. I have always dreamed of just such a woman as that; and now at last, when I behold her perfect image and embodiment, why I simply can't do without her." He was evidently very sincere.

"You are simply in love," I said.

He looked at me a moment, and blushed: "Yes, I honestly believe I am. It's very absurd."

"From some point of view or other," I said, "love is always absurd;" and I decided that the matter was none of my business.

We talked of other things for an hour, but before he took leave of me Sanguinetti reverted to the Beautiful Being at the hairdresser's. "I am sure you will think me a great donkey," he said, "for taking that—that creature so seriously;" and he nodded in the direction of the other side of the street.

"I was always taught in Boston," I answered, "that it is our duty to take things seriously."

I made a point, of course, the next day of stopping at the hairdresser's window for the purpose of obtaining another glimpse of the remarkable woman who had made such an impression upon my friend. I found, in fact, that there was a large aperture in the back of the window—it came just between the two beautiful dolls—through which it was very possible to see what was going on in a considerable part of the shop. Just then, however, the object of Sanguinetti's admiration was not within the range of vision of a passer-by, and I waited some time without her appearing. At last, having improvised a purchase, I entered the aromatic precinct. To my vexation, the attendant

who came forward to serve me was not the charming woman whom I had seen the evening before on the pavement, but the young person of inferior attractions who had come to the door to call her. This young person also wore a black silk dress and had a very neat figure: she was beautifully *coiffée* and very polite. But she was a very different affair from Sanguinetti's friend, and I rather grudged the five francs that I paid her for the little bottle of lavender water that I didn't want. What should I do with a bottle of lavender water? I would give it to Sanguinetti. I lingered in the shop under half a dozen pretexts, but still saw no sign of its lovelier inmate. The other young woman stood smiling and rubbing her hands, answering my questions and giving explanations with high-pitched urbanity. At last I took up my little bottle and laid my hand upon the door-knob. At that moment a velvet curtain was raised at the back of the shop, and the hairdresser's wife presented herself. She stood there a moment with the curtain lifted, looking out and smiling: on her beautiful head was poised a crisp little morning-cap. Yes, she was lovely, and I really understood Sanguinetti's sudden passion. But I could not stand there staring at her, and I had exhausted my expedients: I was obliged to withdraw. I came and stood in front of the shop, however, and presently she approached the

window. She looked into it to see if it was in proper order. She was still smiling—she seemed always to be smiling—but she gave no sign of seeing me, and I felt that if there had been a dozen men standing there, she would have worn that same sweetly unconscious mask. She glanced about her a moment, and then, extending a plump little white hand, she gave a touch to the back hair of one of the waxen ladies—the right-hand one, the blond.

A couple of hours later, rising from breakfast, I repaired to my little balcony, from which post of observation I instantly espied a figure stationed at the hairdresser's window. If I had not recognized it otherwise, the absorbed, contemplative droop of its head would at once have proved it to be Sanguinetti. "Why does he not go inside?" I asked myself. "He can't look at her properly out there." At this conclusion he appeared himself to have arrived, for he suddenly straightened himself up and entered the establishment. He remained within a long time. I grew tired of waiting for him to reappear, and went back to my armchair to finish reading the *Débats*. I had just accomplished this somewhat arduous feat when I heard the lame tinkle of my door-bell, a few moments after which Sanguinetti was ushered in.

He really looked love-sick: he was pale and heavy-

eyed. "My too-susceptible friend," I said, "you are very far gone."

"Yes," he answered: "I am really in love. It is too ridiculous. Please don't tell anyone."

"I shall certainly tell no one," I declared. "But it does not seem to me exactly ridiculous."

He gave me a grateful stare: "Ah, if you don't find it so, *tant mieux.*"

"Regrettable, rather: that's what I should call it."

He gave me another stare: "You think I can't afford it?"

"It is not so much that."

"You think it won't look well? I will arrange it so that the harshest critic will be disarmed. This morning," he added in a moment, "she looks lovelier than ever."

"Yes, I have had a glimpse of her myself," I said. "And you have been in the shop?"

"I have spent half an hour there. I thought it best to go straight to the point."

"What did you say?"

"I said the simple truth—that I have an intense desire to possess her."

"And the hairdresser's wife? how did she take it?"

"She seemed a good deal amused."

"Amused, simply? Nothing more?"

"I think she was a little flattered."

"I hope so."

"Yes," my companion rejoined, "for, after all, her own exquisite taste is half the business." To this proposition I cordially assented, and Sanguinetti went on: "But, after all, too, the dear creature won't lose that in coming to me. I shall make arrangements to have her hair dressed regularly."

"I see that you mean to do things *en prince*. Who is it that dresses her hair?'

"The coiffeur himself."

"The husband?"

"Exactly. They say he is the best in Paris."

"The best husband?" I asked.

"My dear fellow, be serious—the best coiffeur."

"It will certainly be very obliging of him."

"Of course," said Sanguinetti, "I shall pay him for his visits, as—if—as if——" And he paused a moment.

"As if what?"

"As if she were one of his fine ladies. His wife tells me that he goes to all the duchesses."

"Of course," I replied, "that will be something. But still——"

"You mean," said my companion, "that I live so far away? I know that, but I will pay him his cab-fare."

I looked at him, and—I couldn't help it—I began to laugh. I had never seen such a strange mixture of ardor and coolness.

"Ah," he exclaimed, blushing, "you *do* think it ridiculous?"

"Yes," I said, "coming to this point, I confess it makes me laugh."

"I don't care," Sanguinetti declared with amiable doggedness: "I mean to keep her to myself."

Just at this time my attention was much taken up by the arrival in Paris of some relatives who had no great talent for assimilating their habits to foreign customs, and who carried me about in their train as cicerone and interpreter. For three or four weeks I was constantly in their company, and I saw much less of Sanguinetti that I had done before. He used to appear, however, at odd moments in my rooms, being, as may be imagined, very often in the neighborhood. I always asked him for the latest tidings of his grand passion, which had begun to glow with a fervor that made him perfectly indifferent to the judgment of others. The poor fellow was most sincerely in love.

"Je suis tout à ma passion," he would say when I asked him the news. "Until that matter is settled I can think of nothing else. I have always been so when I have wanted a thing intensely. It has be-

come a monomania, a fixed idea; and naturally this case is not an exception."

He was always going into the shop. "We talk it over," he said. "She can't make up her mind."

"I can imagine the difficulty," I answered.

"She says it's a great change."

"I can also imagine that."

"I never see the husband," said Sanguinetti. "He is always away with his duchesses. But she talks it over with him. At first he wouldn't listen to it."

"Naturally."

"He said it would be an irreparable loss. But I am in hopes he will come round. He can get on very well with the other."

"The other?—the little dark one? She is not nearly so pretty."

"Of course not. But she isn't bad in her way. I really think," said Sanguinetti, "that he will come round. If he does not, we will do without his consent, and take the consequences. He will not be sorry, after all, to have the money."

You may be sure that I felt plenty of surprise at the business-like tone in which Sanguinetti discussed this unscrupulous project of becoming the "possessor" of another man's wife. There was certainly no hypocrisy about it: he had quite passed beyond the stage at which it is deemed needful to

throw a sop to propriety. But I said to myself that this was doubtless the Parisian tone, and that since it had made its mark upon so perfect a little model of social orthodoxy as my estimable friend, nothing was more possible than that I too should become equally perverted. Whenever, after this, Sanguinetti came in, he had something to say at first about the lovely creature across the way. "Have you noticed her this morning?" he would demand. "She is really enchanting. I thought of asking leave to kiss her."

"I wonder you should ask leave," I answered. "I should suppose you would do it without leave, and count upon being forgiven."

"I am afraid of hurting her," he said. "And then if I should be seen from the street, it would look rather absurd."

I could only say that he seemed to me a very odd mixture of audacity and discretion, but he went on without heeding my comments: "You may laugh at the idea, but, upon my word, to me she is different every day: she has never the same expression. Sometimes she's a little melancholy—sometimes she's in high spirits."

"I should say she was always smiling."

"Superficially, yes," said Sanguinetti. "That's all the vulgar see. But there's something beneath it—the most delicious little pensive look. At bottom

she's sad. She's weary of her position there, it's so public."

"Yesterday she was very pale," he would say at another time. "I'm sure she wants rest. That constant movement can't be good for her. It's true," he added, "that she moves very slowly."

"Yes," said I, "she seemed to me to move very slowly."

"And so beautifully! Still, with me," Sanguinetti went on, "she shall be perfectly quiet: I will see how that suits her."

"I should think," I objected, "that she would need a little exercise."

He stared a moment, and then accused me, as he often did, of "making game of him." "There is something in your tone in saying that," he declared; but he very shortly afterward forgot my sarcastic tendencies, and came to announce to me a change in the lady's coiffure: "Have you noticed that she has her hair dressed differently? I don't know that I like it: it covers up her forehead. But it's beautifully done, it's entirely new, and you will see that it will set the fashion for all Paris."

"Do they take the fashion from her?" I asked.

"Always. All the knowing people keep a note of her successive coiffures."

"And when you have carried her off, what will the knowing people do?"

"They will go by the other, the dark one—Mademoiselle Clémentine."

"Is that her name? And the name of your sweetheart?"

Sanguinetti looked at me an instant with his usual helplessly mistrustful little blush, and then he answered, "Théodolinde."

When I asked him how his suit was prospering, he usually replied that he believed it to be merely a question of time. "We keep talking it over, and in that way, at any rate, I can see her. The poor woman can't get used to the idea."

"I should think not."

"She says it would change everything—that the shop would be a different place without her. She is so well known, so universally admired. I tell her that it will not be impossible to get a clever substitute; and she answers that, clever as the substitute may be, she will never have the peculiar charm of Théodolinde."

"Ah! she herself is aware then of this peculiar charm?"

"Perfectly, and it delights her to have me talk about it."

A part of the charm's peculiarity, I reflected, was that it was not spoiled by the absence of modesty; yet I also remembered the coiffeur's handsome wife had looked extremely modest. Sanguinetti, how-

ever, appeared bent upon ministering to her vanity: I learned that he was making her presents. "I have given her a pair of earrings," he announced, "and she is wearing them now. Do notice them as you pass. They are great big amethysts, and are extremely becoming."

I looked out for our beautiful friend the next time I left the house, but she was not visible through the hairdresser's window. Her plainer companion was waiting upon a fine lady, presumably one of the duchesses, while Madame Théodolinde herself, I supposed, was posturing before one of the mirrors in the inner apartment with Sanguinetti's big amethysts in her ears.

One day he told me that he had determined to buy her a *parure,* and he greatly wished I would come and help him choose it. I called him an extravagant dog, but I good-naturedly consented to accompany him to the jeweler's. He led me to the Palais Royal, and there, somewhat to my surprise, introduced me into one of those dazzling little shops which wear upon their front in neat gilt letters the candid announcement, "Imitation." Here you may purchase any number of glittering gems for the most trifling sum, and indulge at a moderate expense a pardonable taste for splendor. And the splendor is most effective, the glitter of the counterfeit jewels most natural. It is only the sentiment

of the thing, you say to yourself, that prevents you from making all your purchases of jewelry in one of these convenient establishments; though, indeed, as their proprietors very aptly remark, five thousand dollars more is a good deal to pay for sentiment. Of this expensive superstition, however, I should have expected Sanguinetti to be guilty.

"You are not going to get a real set?" I asked.

He seemed a little annoyed: "Wouldn't you in that case blow me up for my extravagance?"

"It is highly probable. And yet a present of false jewelry! The handsomer it is, you know, the more ridiculous it is."

"I have thought of that," said my friend, "and I confess I am rather ashamed of myself. I should like to give her a real set. But, you see, I want diamonds and sapphires, and a real set such as I desire would cost about twenty thousand dollars. That's a good deal for—for——" And he paused a moment.

"For a barber's wife," I said to myself.

"Besides," my companion added, "she won't know the difference." I thought he rather under-estimated her intelligence: a pretty Parisienne was, by instinct, a judge of parures. I remembered, however, that he had rarely spoken of this lady's intellectual qualities: he had dwelt exclusively upon her beauty and sweetness. So I stood by him while he

purchased for two hundred francs a gorgeous necklace and coronet of the stones of Golconda. His passion was an odd affair altogether, and an oddity the more or the less hardly mattered. He remarked, moreover, that he had at home a curious collection of artificial gems, and that these things would be an interesting addition to his stock. "I shall make her wear them all," he exclaimed; and I wondered how she would like it.

He told me afterwards that his offering had been most gratefully received, that she was now wearing the wonderful necklace, and that she looked lovelier than ever.

That evening, however, I stopped before the shop to catch a glimpse, if possible, of the barber's lady thus splendidly adorned. I had seldom been fortunate enough to espy her, and on this occasion I turned away disappointed. Just as I was doing so I perceived something which suggested that she was making a fool of my amiable friend. On the radiant bosom of one of the great waxen dolls in her window glittered a necklace of brilliants which bore a striking resemblance to the article I had helped Sanguinetti to select. She had made over her lover's tribute to this rosy effigy, to whom, it must be confessed, it was very becoming.

Yet, for all this, I was out in my calculation. A week later Sanguinetti came into my rooms with a

radiant countenance, and announced to me the consummation of his dream. "She is mine! she is mine! mine only!" he cried, dropping into a chair.

"She has left the shop?" I demanded.

"Last night—at eleven o'clock. We went off in a cab."

"You have her at home?"

"For ever and ever!" he declared ecstatically.

"My dear fellow, my compliments!"

"It was not an easy matter," he went on. "But I held her in my arms."

I renewed my compliments, and said I hoped she was happy; and he declared that she was smiling more than ever. Positively! And he added that I must immediately come and see her: he was impatient to present me. Nothing, I answered, would give me greater pleasure, but meanwhile what did the husband say?

"He grumbles a bit," said Sanguinetti, "but I gave him five hundred francs."

"You have got off easily," I said; and I promised that at my first moment of leisure I would call upon my friend's new companion. I saw him three or four times before this moment arrived, and he assured me that she had made a happy man of him. "Whenever I have greatly wanted a thing, waited for it, and at last got it, I have always been in bliss for a month afterward," he said. "But

I think that this time my pleasure will really last."

"It will last as long, I hope, as she does herself," I answered.

"I am sure it will. This is the sort of thing—yes, smile away—in which I get my happiness."

"Vous n'êtes pas difficile," I rejoined.

"Of course she's perishable," he added in a moment.

"Ah!" said I, "you must take good care of her."

And a day or two later, on his coming for me, I went with him to his apartment. His rooms were charming, and lined from ceiling to floor with the "pretty things" of the occupant—tapestries and bronzes, terra-cotta medallions and precious specimens of porcelain. There were cabinets and tables charged with similar treasures: the place was a perfect little museum. Sanguinetti led me through two or three rooms, and then stopped near a window, close to which, half hidden by the curtain, stood a lady, with her head turned away from us, looking out. In spite of our approach, she stood motionless until my friend went up to her and with a gallant, affectionate movement placed his arm round her waist. Hereupon she slowly turned and gazed at me with a beautiful brilliant face and large quiet eyes.

"It is a pity she creaks," said my companion as I was making my bow. And then, as I made it,

I perceived with amazement—and amusement—the cause of her creaking. She existed only from the waist upward, and the skirt of her dress was a very neat pedestal covered with red velvet. Sanguinetti gave another loving twist, and she slowly revolved again, making a little gentle squeal. She exhibited the back of her head, with its beautifully braided tresses resting upon her sloping waxen shoulders. She was the right-hand effigy of the coiffeur's window—the blond! Her movement, as Sanguinetti had claimed, was particularly commendable, and of all his pretty things she was certainly the prettiest.

A LIGHT MAN

A LIGHT MAN

And I—what I seem to my friend, you see—
What I soon shall seem to his love, you guess.
What I seem to myself, do you ask of me?
No hero, I confess.
A LIGHT WOMAN. BROWNING'S MEN AND WOMEN.

APRIL 4, 1857.—I have changed my sky without changing my mind. I resume these old notes in a new world. I hardly know of what use they are; but it's easier to preserve the habit than to break it. I have been at home now a week—at home, forsooth! And yet after all, it is home. I'm dejected, I'm bored, I'm blue. How can a man be more at home than that? Nevertheless, I'm the citizen of a great country, and for that matter, of a great city. I walked to-day some ten miles or so along Broadway, and on the whole I don't blush for my native land. We're a capable race and a good-looking withal; and I don't see why we shouldn't prosper as well as another. This, by the way, ought to be a very encouraging reflection.

A capable fellow and a good-looking withal; I don't see why he shouldn't die a millionnaire. At all events he must set bravely to work. When a man has, at thirty-two, a net income of considerably less than nothing, he can scarcely hope to overtake a fortune before he himself is overtaken by age and philosophy—two deplorable obstructions. I'm afraid that one of them has already planted itself in my path. What am I? What do I wish? Whither do I tend? What do I believe? I am constantly beset by these impertinent whisperings. Formerly it was enough that I was Maximus Austin; that I was endowed with a cheerful mind and a good digestion; that one day or another, when I had come to the end, I should return to America and begin at the beginning; that, meanwhile, existence was sweet in—in the Rue Tranchet. But now! Has the sweetness really passed out of life? Have I eaten the plums and left nothing but the bread and milk and corn-starch, or whatever the horrible concoction is?—we had it to-day for dinner. Pleasure, at least, I imagine—pleasure pure and simple, pleasure crude, brutal and vulgar—this poor flimsy delusion has lost all its prettiness. I shall never again care for certain things—and indeed for certain persons. Of such things, of such persons, I firmly maintain, however, that I was never an enthusiastic votary. It would be more to my credit,

I suppose, if I had been. More would be forgiven me if I had loved a little more, if into all my folly and egotism I had put a little more *naïveté* and sincerity. Well, I did the best I could, I was at once too bad and too good for it all. At present, it's far enough off; I've put the sea between us. I'm stranded. I sit high and dry, scanning the horizon for a friendly sail, or waiting for a high tide to set me afloat. The wave of pleasure has planted me here in the sand. Shall I owe my rescue to the wave of pain? At moments my heart throbs with a sort of ecstatic longing to expiate my stupid peccadilloes. I see, as through a glass, darkly, the beauty of labor and love. Decidedly, I'm willing to work. It's written.

7th.—My sail is in sight; it's at hand; I've all but boarded the vessel. I received this morning a letter from the best man in the world. Here it is:

DEAR MAX: I see this very moment, in the old newspaper which had already passed through my hands without yielding up its most precious item, the announcement of your arrival in New York. To think of your having perhaps missed the grasp of my hand. Here it is, dear Max—to rap on the knuckles, if you like. When I say I have just read of your arrival, I mean that twenty minutes have elapsed by the clock. These have been spent in conversation with my excellent friend Mr. Frederick Sloane—your excellent self being the subject. I haven't time to say more about Mr. Sloane than that he is very anxious to make your acquaintance, and that, if your time is not otherwise predestined, he would esteem it a particular favor to have you pass a month under his roof —the ample roof which covers my own devoted head. It ap-

pears that he knew your mother very intimately, and he has a taste for visiting the amenities of the parents upon the children; the original ground of my own connection with him was that he had been a particular friend of my father. You may have heard your mother speak of him—a perfect eccentric, but a charming one. He will make you most welcome. But whether or no you come for his sake, come for mine. I have a hundred questions on the end of my pen, but I can't drop them, lest I should lose the mail. You'll not refuse me without an excellent reason, and I shan't excuse you, even then. So the sooner the better. Yours more than ever,

THEODORE LISLE.

Theodore's letter is of course very kind, but it's perfectly obscure. My mother may have had the highest regards for Mr. Sloane, but she never mentioned his name in my hearing. Who is he, what is he, and what is the nature of his relations with Theodore? I shall learn betimes. I have written to Theodore that I gladly accept (I believe I suppressed the "gladly" though) his friend's invitation, and that I shall immediately present myself. What better can I do? I shall, at the narrowest calculation, obtain food and lodging while I invoke the fates. I shall have a basis of operations. D., it appears, is a long day's journey, but delicious when you reach it. I'm curious to see a delicious American town. And a month's stay! Mr. Frederick Sloane, whoever you are, *vous faites bien les choses,* and the little that I know of you is very much to your credit. You enjoyed the friendship of my dear mother, you possess the esteem of my incom-

parable Theodore, you commend yourself to my own affection. At this rate, I shan't grudge it.

D——, 14th.—I have been here since Thursday evening—three days. As we rattled up to the tavern in the village, I perceived from the top of the coach, in the twilight, Theodore beneath the porch, scanning the vehicle, with all his affectionate soul in his eyes. I made hardly more than two downward strides into his arms—or, at all events, into his hands. He has grown older, of course, in these five years, but less so than I had expected. His is one of those smooth unwrinkled souls that infuse a perennial fairness and freshness into the body. As tall as ever, moreover, and as lean and clean. How short and fat and dark and debauched he makes one feel! By nothing he says or means, of course, but merely by his old unconscious purity and simplicity—that slender aspiring rectitude which makes him remind you of the tower of an English abbey. He greeted me with smiles, and stares, and formidable blushes. He assures me that he never would have known me, and that five years have quite transformed my physiognomy. I asked him if it was for the better? He looked at me hard for a moment, with his eyes of blue, and then, for all answer, he blushed again.

On my arrival we agreed to walk over from the village. He dismissed his wagon with my trunk,

and we went arm-in-arm through the dusk. The town is seated at the foot of certain mountains, whose names I have yet to learn, and at the head of a vast sheet of water which, as yet, too, I know only as "The Lake." The road hitherward soon leaves the village and wanders in rural loveliness by the lakeside. Sometimes the water is hidden by clumps of trees, behind which we heard it lapping and gurgling in the darkness; sometimes it stretches out from your feet in unspotted beauty, offering its broad white bosom to the embrace of the dark fraternal hills. The walk from the tavern takes some half an hour, in which space Theodore had explained his position to my comparative satisfaction. Mr. Sloane is old, widowed and rich; his age is seventy-two, and as his health is thoroughly broken, is practically even greater; and his fortune—Theodore, characteristically, doesn't know its numerical formula. It's probably a round million. He has lived much abroad, and in the thick of things; he has had adventures and passions and all that sort of thing; and now, in the evening of his days, like an old French diplomat, he takes it into his head to write his memoirs. To this end he has taken poor Theodore to his generous side, to serve as his guide, philosopher and friend. He has been a great scribbler, says Theodore, all his days, and he proposes to incorporate a large amount of promiscuous

literary matter into this singular record of his existence. Theodore's principal function seems to be to get him to leave things out. In fact, the poor boy seems troubled in conscience. His patron's lucubrations have taken the turn of all memoirs, and become *tout bonnement* immoral. On the whole, he declares they are a very odd mixture—a jumble of pretentious trash and of excellent good sense. I can readily understand it. The old man bores me, puzzles me, and amuses me.

He was in waiting to receive me. We found him in his library—which, by the way, is simply the most delightful apartment that I ever smoked a cigar in—a room for a lifetime. At one end stands a great fireplace, with a florid, fantastic mantel-piece in carved white marble—an importation, of course, and as one may say, an interpolation; the groundwork of the house, the "fixtures," being throughout plain, solid and domestic. Over the mantel-shelf is a large landscape painting, a *soi-disant* Gainsborough, full of the mellow glory of an English summer. Beneath it stands a fantastic litter of French bronzes and outlandish *chinoiseries*. Facing the door, as you enter, is a vast window set in a recess, with cushioned seats and large clear panes, stationed as it were at the very apex of the lake (which forms an almost perfect oval) and commanding a view of its whole extent. At the other

end, opposite the fire-place, the wall is studded, from floor to ceiling, with choice foreign paintings, placed in relief against the orthodox crimson screen. Elsewhere the walls are covered with books, arranged neither in formal regularity nor quite helter-skelter, but in a sort of genial mutual incongruity, which tells that sooner or later each volume feels sure of leaving the ranks and returning into different company. Mr. Sloane uses his books. His two passions, according to Theodore, are reading and talking; but to talk he must have a book in his hand. The charm of the room lies in the absence of the portentous soberness—the browns, and blacks, and greys—which distinguish most rooms of its class. It's a sort of female study. There are half a dozen light colors scattered about—pink in the carpet, tender blue in the curtains, yellow in the chairs. The result is a general look of brightness, and lightness, and unpedantic elegance. You perceive the place to be the home, not of a man of learning, but of a man of fancy.

He rose from his chair—the man of fancy, to greet me—the man of fact. As I looked upon him, in the lamp-light, it seemed to me, for the first five minutes, that I had seldom seen a worse-favored human creature. It took me then five minutes to get the point of view; then I began to admire. He

is under-sized, or at best of my own moderate stature, bent and contracted with years; thin, however, where I am stout, and light where I am heavy. In color we're about equally dark. Mr. Sloane, however, is curiously pale, with a dead opaque yellow pallor. Literally, it's a magnificent yellow. His skin is of just the hue and apparent texture of some old crumpled Oriental scroll. I know a dozen painters who would give more than they have to arrive at the exact "tone" of his thick-veined saffron-colored hands—his polished ivory knuckles. His eyes are circled with red, but within their unhealthy orbits they scintillate like black diamonds. His nose, owing to the falling away of other portions of his face, has assumed a grotesque, unnatural prominence; it describes an immense arch, gleaming like parchment stretched on ivory. He has kept his teeth, but replaced his hair by a dead black wig; of course he's clean shaven. In his dress he has a muffled, wadded look, and an apparent aversion to linen, inasmuch as none is visible on his person. He seems neat enough, but not fastidious. At first, as I say, I fancied him monstrously ugly; but on further acquaintance I perceived that what I had taken for ugliness is nothing but the incomplete remains of remarkable good looks. The lines of his features are delicate; his nose, *ceteris paribus,* would be extremely handsome; his eyes are the eyes of a

mind, not of a body. There is intelligence on his brow and sweetness on his lips.

He offered his two hands, as Theodore introduced me; I gave him my own, and he stood smiling upon me like some quaint old image in ivory and ebony, scanning my face with the sombre sparkle of his gaze. "Good heaven!" he said, at last, "how much you look like your father." I sat down, and for half an hour we talked of many things; of my journey, of my impressions of home, of my reminiscences of Europe, and, by implication, of my prospects. His voice is aged and cracked, but he uses it with immense energy. Mr. Sloane is not yet in his dotage, by a long shot. He nevertheless makes himself out a woefully old man. In reply to an inquiry I made about his health, he favored me with a long list of his infirmities (some of which are very trying, certainly) and assured me that he had but a mere pinch of vitality left.

"I live," he said, "out of mere curiosity."

"I have heard of people dying," I answered, "from the same motive."

He looked at me a moment, as if to ascertain whether I was making light of his statement. And then, after a pause, "Perhaps you don't know," said he, with a certain vague pomposity, "that I disbelieve in a future life."

Poor Theodore! at these words he got up and walked to the fire.

"Well, we shan't quarrel about that," said I. Theodore turned round, staring.

"Do you mean that you agree with me?" the old man asked.

"I certainly haven't come here to talk theology. Dear me, Mr. Sloane," I said, "don't ask me to disbelieve, and I'll never ask you to believe."

"Come," cried Mr. Sloane, rubbing his hands, "you'll not persuade me you're a Christian—like your friend Theodore there."

"Like Theodore—assuredly not." And then, somehow, I don't know why, at the thought of Theodore's Christianism, I burst into a laugh. "Excuse me, my dear fellow," I said, "you know, for the last ten years I have lived in Catholic countries."

"Good, good, good!" cried Mr. Sloane, rubbing his hands and clapping them together, and laughing with high relish.

"Dear me," said Theodore, smiling, but vaguely apprehensive, too—and a little touched, perhaps, by my involuntary reflection upon the quality of his faith, "I hope you're not a Roman Catholic."

I saw the old man, with his hands locked, eyeing me shrewdly, and waiting for my answer. I pondered a moment in mock gravity. "I shall make my

confession," I said. "I've been in the East, you know. I'm a Mohammedan!"

Hereupon Mr. Sloane broke out into a wheezy ecstasy of glee. Verily, I thought, if he lives for curiosity, he's easily satisfied.

We went into dinner, in the constitution of which I should have been at loss to suggest the shadow of an improvement. I observed, by the way, that for a victim of paralysis, neuralgia, dyspepsia, and a thousand other ills, Mr. Sloane plies a most inconsequential knife and fork. Sweets, and spices, and condiments seem to be the chief of his diet. After dinner he dismissed us, in consideration of my natural desire to see my friend in private. Theodore has capital quarters—a chamber and sitting-room as luxurious as a man (or as a woman, for that matter) could possibly wish. We talked till near midnight—of ourselves and of our lemon-colored host below. That is, I spoke of myself, and Theodore listened; and then Theodore told of Mr. Sloane and I listened. His commerce with the old man has sharpened his wits. Sloane has taught him to observe and judge, and Theodore turns around, observes, judges—him! He has become quite the critic and analyst. There is something very pleasant in the sagacity of virtue, in discernment without bitterness, penetration without spite. Theodore has all these unalloyed graces, to say

nothing of an angelic charity. At midnight we repaired to the library to take leave of our host till the morrow—an attention which, under all circumstances, he formally exacts. As I gave him my hand he held it again and looked at me as he had done on my arrival. "Good heaven," he said, at last, "how much you look like your mother!"

To-night, at the end of my third day, I begin to feel decidedly at home. The fact is, I'm supremely comfortable. The house is pervaded by an indefinable, irresistible air of luxury and privacy. Mr. Frederick Sloane must be a horribly corrupt old mortal. Already in his hateful, delightful presence I have become heartily reconciled to doing nothing. But with Theodore on one side, I honestly believe I can defy Mr. Sloane on the other. The former asked me this morning, with real solicitude, in allusion to the bit of dialogue I have quoted above on matters of faith, if I had actually ceased to care for divine things. I assured him that I would rather utterly lose my sense of the picturesque, than do anything to detract from the splendor of religious worship. Some of the happiest hours of my life, I told him, have been spent in cathedrals. He looked at me awhile, in friendly sadness. "I hardly know," he said, "whether you are worse than Mr. Sloane, or better."

But Theodore is, after all, in duty bound to give

a man a long rope in these matters. His own rope is one of the longest. He reads Voltaire with Mr. Sloane, and Emerson in his own room. He's the stronger man of the two; he has the bigger stomach. Mr. Sloane delights, of course, in Voltaire, but he can't read a line of Emerson. Theodore delights in Emerson, and has excellent taste in the matter of Voltaire. It appears that since we parted in Paris, five years ago, his conscience has dwelt in many lands. *C'est toute une histoire*—which he tells very nicely. He left college determined to enter the ministry, and came abroad to lay the basis of his theological greatness in some German repository of science. He appears to have studied, not wisely but too well. Instead of faith full-armed and serene, there sprang from the labor of his brain a myriad abortive doubts, piping for sustenance. He went for a winter to Italy, where, I take it, he was not quite so much afflicted as he ought to have been, at the sight of the beautiful spiritual repose which he had missed. It was after this that we spent those three months together in Brittany—the best-spent three months of my whole ten years abroad. Theodore inoculated me, I think, with a little of his sacred fermentation, and I infused into his conscience something of my vulgar indifference; and we agreed together that there were a few good things left—health, friendship, a summer sky, and

the lovely by-ways of an old French province. He came home, returned to theology, accepted a "call," and made an attempt to respond to it. But the inner voice failed him. His outlook was cheerless enough. During his absence his married sister, the elder one, had taken the other to live with her, relieving Theodore of the charge of contribution to her support. But suddenly, behold the husband, the brother-in-law, dies, leaving a mere fragment of property; and the two ladies, with their two little girls, are afloat in the wide world. Theodore finds himself at twenty-six without an income, without a profession, and with a family of four females to support. Well, in his quiet way, he draws on his courage. The history of the two years which preceded his initiation here is a simple record of practical manly devotion. He rescued his sisters and nieces from the deep waters, placed them high and dry, established them somewhere in decent gentility—and then found at last that his strength had left him—had dropped dead like an over-ridden horse. In short, he had worked himself ill. It was now his sisters' turn. They nursed him with all the added tenderness of gratitude for the past and terror of the future, and brought him safely through a grievous malady. Meanwhile Mr. Sloane, having decided to treat himself to a private secretary and suffered dreadful mischance in three successive ex-

periments, had heard of Theodore's situation and his merits; had furthermore recognized in him the son of an early and intimate friend, and had finally offered him the very comfortable position which he now occupies. There is a decided incongruity between Theodore as a man—as Theodore, in fine—and the dear fellow as the intellectual agent, confidant, complaisant, purveyor, pander—what you will—of a battered old cynic and worldly dilettante. There seems at first sight a perfect want of agreement between his character and his function. One is gold and the other brass, or something very like it. But on reflection I perfectly conceive that he should, under the circumstances, have accepted Mr. Sloane's offer and been content to do his duties. Just heaven! Theodore's contentment in such a case is a theme for the moralist—a better moralist than I. The best and purest mortals are an odd mixture, and in none of us does honestly exist *totus, teres, atque rotundus.* Ideally, Theodore hasn't the smallest business *dans cette galère.* It offends my sense of propriety to find him here. I feel like admonishing him as a friend that he has knocked at the wrong door, and that he had better retreat before he is brought to the blush. Really, as I say, I suppose he might as well be here, as reading Emerson "evenings," in the back parlor, to those two very plain sisters—judging from their photographs.

Practically it hurts no one to compromise with his tendencies. Poor Theodore was weak, depressed, out of work. Mr. Sloane offers him a lodging and a salary in return for—after all, merely a little forbearance. All he has to do is to read to the old man, lay down the book awhile, with his finger in the place, and let him talk; take it up again, read another dozen pages and submit to another commentary. Then to write a dozen pages under his dictation—to suggest a word, polish off a period, or help him out with a reluctant idea or a half-remembered fact. This is all, I say; and yet this is much. Theodore's apparent success proves it to be much, as well as the old man's satisfaction. It's a part; he plays it. He uses tact; he has taken a reef in his pride; he has clipped the sting of his conscience, he listens, he talks, conciliates, accommodates, flatters—does it as well as many a worse man—does it far better than I. I might dominate Mr. Sloane, but I doubt that I could serve him. But after all, it's not a matter of better and worse. In every son of woman there are two men—the practical man and the dreamer. We live for our dreams—but, meanwhile, we live by our wits. When the dreamer is a poet, his brother is an artist. Theodore is essentially a man of taste. If he were not destined to become a high priest among moralists, he might be a prince among connoisseurs. He

plays his part then, artistically, with taste, with relish—with all the *finesse* of his delicate fancy. How can Mr. Sloane fail to believe that he possesses a paragon? He is no such fool as to misconceive a *belle âme* when a *belle âme* comes in his way. He confidentially assured me this morning that Theodore has the most beautiful mind in the world, but that it's a pity he's so simple as not to suspect it. If he only doesn't ruin him with his flattery!

19th.—I'm certainly fortunate among men. This morning when, tentatively, I spoke of understaying my month, Mr. Sloane rose from his seat in horror, and declared that for the present I must regard his house as my home. "Come, come," he said, "when you leave this place where do you intend to go?" Where, indeed? I graciously allowed Mr. Sloane to have the best of the argument. Theodore assures me that he appreciates these and other affabilities, and that I have made what he calls a "conquest" of his venerable heart. Poor, battered, bamboozled old organ! he would have one believe that it has a most tragical record of capture and recapture. At all events, it appears that I'm master of the citadel. For the present I have no wish to evacuate. I feel, nevertheless, in some far-off corner of my soul, that I ought to shoulder my victorious banner and advance to more fruitful triumphs.

I blush for my slothful inaction. It isn't that I'm

willing to stay here a month, but that I'm willing to stay here six. Such is the charming, disgusting truth. Have I actually outlived the age of energy? Have I survived my ambition, my integrity, my self-respect? Verily I ought to have survived the habit of asking myself silly questions. I made up my mind long ago that I care deeply for nothing save my own personal comfort, and I don't care for that sufficiently to secure it at the cost of acute temporary suffering. I have a passion for nothing—not even for life. I know very well the appearance I make in the world. I pass for intelligent, well-informed, accomplished, amiable, strong. I'm supposed to have a keen relish for letters, for music, for science, for art. There was a time when I fancied I cared for scientific research; but I know now that I care for it as little as I really do for Shakespeare, for Rubens, for Rossini. When I was younger, I used to find a certain entertainment in the contemplation of men and women. I liked to see them hurrying on each other's heels across the stage. But I'm sick and tired of them now; not that I'm a misanthrope, God forbid. They're not worth hating. I never knew but one creature who was, and her I went and loved. To be consistent, I ought to have hated my mother—and now I ought to hate Theodore. But I don't—truly, on the whole, I don't—any more than I love him. I

firmly believe that a large portion of his happiness rests upon his devout conviction that I really care for him. He believes in that, as he believes in all the rest of it—in my knowledge, my music, my underlying "earnestness," my sense of beauty and love of truth. Oh, for a *man* among them all—a fellow with eyes in his head—eyes that would look me through and through, and flash out in scorn of my nothingness. Then, perhaps, I might answer him with rage; *then,* perhaps, I might feel a simple, healthy emotion.

In the name of bare nutrition—in the fear of starvation—what am I to do? (I was obliged this morning to borrow ten dollars from Theodore, who remembered gleefully that he has been owing me no less than twenty-five dollars for the past four years, and in fact has preserved a note to this effect.) Within the last week I have hatched a desperate scheme. I have deliberately conceived the idea of marrying money. Why not accept and utilize the goods of the gods? It is not my fault, after all, if I pass for a superior fellow. Why not admit that practically, mechanically—as I may say—maritally, I *may* be a superior fellow? I warrant myself, at least, thoroughly gentle. I should never beat my wife; I doubt that I should ever snub her. Assume that her fortune has the proper number of zeros and that she herself is one of them, and I can

actually imagine her adoring me. It's not impossible that I've hit the nail and solved my riddle. Curiously, as I look back upon my brief career, it all seems to tend in a certain way to this consummation. It has its graceful curves and crooks, indeed, and here and there a passionate tangent; but on the whole, if I were to unfold it here *à la* Hogarth, what better legend could I scrawl beneath the series of pictures than So-and-So's Progress to a Mercenary Marriage?

Coming events do what we all know with their shadows. My glorious destiny is, perhaps, not far off. I already feel throughout my person a magnificent languor—as from the possession of past opulence. Or is it simply my sense of perfect well-being in this perfectly appointed home? Is it simply the absolutely comfortable life I lead in this delicious old house? At all events, the house *is* delicious, and my only complaint of Mr. Sloane is, that instead of an old widower, he's not an old widow (or I a young maid), so that I might marry him, survive him, and dwell forever in this rich and mellow home. As I write here, at my bedroom table, I have only to stretch out an arm and raise the window curtain, to see the thick-planted garden budding and breathing, and growing in the moonshine. Far above, in the liquid darkness, sails the glory-freighted orb of the moon; beneath, in its light, lies the lake, in mur-

muring, troubled sleep; around stand the gentle mountains, wearing the cold reflection on their shoulders, or hiding it away in their glens. So much for midnight. To-morrow the sun will be lovely with the beauty of day. Under one aspect or another I have it always before me. At the end of the garden is moored a boat, in which Theodore and I have repeatedly explored the surface of the lake, and visited the mild wilderness of its shores. What lovely landward caves and bays—what alder-smothered creeks—what lily-sheeted pools—what sheer steep hillsides, darkening the water with the downward image of their earthly greenness. I confess that in these excursions Theodore does the rowing and I the contemplation. Mr. Sloane avoids the water—on account of the dampness, he says; but because he's afraid of drowning, I suspect.

22d.—Theodore is right. The *bonhomme* has taken me into his favor. I protest I don't see how he was to escape it. I doubt that there has ever been a better flattered man. I don't blush for it. In one coin or another I must repay his hospitality —which is certainly very liberal. Theodore advises him, helps him, comforts him; I amuse him, surprise him, deprave him. This is speaking vastly well for my power. He pretends to be surprised at nothing, and to possess in perfection—poor, pitiable old fop —the art *nil admirari;* but repeatedly, I know, I

have clear outskipped his fancy. As for his depravity, it's a very pretty piece of wickedness, but it strikes me as a purely intellectual matter. I imagine him never to have had any downright senses. He may have been unclean; morally, he's not over savory now; but he never can have been what the French call a *viveur*. He's too delicate, he's of a feminine turn; and what woman was ever a *viveur?* He likes to sit in his chair, and read scandal, talk scandal, make scandal, so far as he may without catching a cold or incurring a headache. I already feel as if I had known him a lifetime. I read him as clearly, I think, as if I had. I know the type to which he belongs; I have encountered, first and last, a round dozen of specimens. He's neither more nor less than a gossip—a gossip flanked by a coxcomb and an egotist. He's shallow, vain, cold, superstitious, timid, pretentious, capricious; a pretty jumble of virtues! And yet, for all this, he has his good points. His caprices are sometimes generous, I imagine; and his aversion to the harsh, cruel, and hideous, frequently takes the form of positive kindness and charity. His memory (for trifles) is remarkable, and (where his own performances are not involved) his taste is excellent. He has no will for evil more than for good. He is the victim, however, of more illusions with regard to himself than I ever knew a human heart

to find lodging for. At the age of twenty, poor, ignorant and remarkably handsome, he married a woman of immense wealth, many years his senior. At the end of three years she very considerately went out of the world, and left him to the enjoyment of his freedom and riches. If he had remained poor, he might from time to time have rubbed at random against the truth, and would still be wearing a few of its sacred smutches on his sleeve. But he wraps himself in his money as in a wadded dressing gown, and goes trundling through life on his little gold wheels, as warm and close as an unweaned baby. The greater part of his career, from his marriage to within fifteen years ago, was spent in Europe, which, superficially, he knows very well. He has lived in fifty places, known hundreds of people, and spent thousands of dollars. At one time, I believe, he spent a few thousands too many, trembled for an instant on the verge of a pecuniary crash; but recovered himself, and found himself more frightened than hurt, but loudly admonished to lower his pitch. He passed five years in a species of penitent seclusion on the lake of—I forget what (his genius seems to be partial to lakes), and formed the rudiments of his present magnificent taste for literature; I can't call it anything but magnificent, so long as it must needs have Theodore Lisle as a ministrant. At the close of this period, by economy,

he had become a rich man again. The control and discipline exercised during these years upon his desires and his natural love of luxury, must have been the sole act of real resolution in the history of Mr. Sloane's life. It was rendered possible by his morbid, his actually pusillanimous dread of poverty; he doesn't feel safe without half a million between him and starvation. Meanwhile he had turned from a young man into an old man; his health was broken, his spirit was jaded, and I imagine, to do him justice, that he began to feel certain natural, filial longings for this dear American mother of us all. They say the most hopeless truants and triflers have come to it. He came to it, at all events; he packed up his books and pictures and gimcracks, and bade farewell to Europe. This house which he now occupies belonged to his wife's estate. She had, for sentimental reasons of her own, commended it to his particular regard. On his return he came to see it, fancied it, turned a parcel of carpenters and upholsterers into it, and by inhabiting it for twelve years, transformed it into the perfect dwelling which I find it. Here he has spent all his time, with the exception of a regular winter's visit to New York—a practice recently discontinued, owing to the aggravation of his physical condition and the projection of these famous memoirs. His life has finally come to be passed in

comparative solitude. He tells of various distant relatives, as well as intimate friends of both sexes, who used formerly to be largely entertained at his cost, but with each of them, in the course of time, he seems to have clipped the thread of intercourse. Throughout life, evidently, he has shown great delicacy of tact in keeping himself clean of parasites. Rich, lonely and vain, he must have been fair game for the race of social sycophants and cormorants; and it's richly to the credit of his shrewdness and good sense, that he has suffered so little havoc in substance and happiness. Apparently they've been a sad lot of bunglers. I maintain that he's to be—how shall I say it?—possessed. But you must work in obedience to certain definite laws. Doctor Jones, his physician, tells me that in point of fact he has had for the past ten years an unbroken series of favorites, *protégés,* and heirs presumptive; but that each, in turn, by some fatally false movement, has fairly unjointed his nose. The doctor declares, moreover, that they were, at best, a wofully common set of people. Gradually the old man seems to have developed a preference for two or three strictly exquisite intimates, over a throng of your vulgar charmers. His tardy literary schemes, too—fruit of his all but sapless senility—have absorbed more and more of his time and attention. The end of it all is, therefore, that Theodore and I have him

quite to ourselves, and that it behooves us to keep our noses on our faces, and our heads on our shoulders.

Poor, pretentious old simpleton! It's not his fault, after all, that he fancies himself a great little man. How are you to judge of the stature of mankind when men have forever addressed you on their knees? Peace and joy to his innocent fatuity! He believes himself the most rational of men; in fact, he's the most vapidly sentimental. He fancies himself a philosopher, a thinker, a student. His philosophy and his erudition are quite of a piece; they would lie at ease in the palm of Theodore's hand. He prides himself on his good manners, his urbanity, his unvarying observance of the becoming. My private impression is, that his cramped old bosom contains unsuspected treasures of cunning impertinence. He takes his stand on his speculative audacity—his direct, undaunted gaze at the universe; in truth, his mind is haunted by a hundred dingy old-world spectres and theological phantasms. He fancies himself one of the weightiest of men; he is essentially one of the lightest. He deems himself ardent, impulsive, passionate, magnanimous —capable of boundless enthusiasm for an idea or a sentiment. It is clear to me that, on no occasion of pure, disinterested action can he ever have taken a timely, positive second step. He fancies, finally,

that he has drained the cup of life to the dregs; that he has known, in its bitterest intensity, every emotion of which the human spirit is capable; that he has loved, struggled, and suffered. Stuff and nonsense, all of it. He has never loved any one but himself; he has never suffered from anything but an undigested supper or an exploded pretension; he has never touched with the end of his lips the vulgar bowl from which the mass of mankind quaffs its great floods of joy and sorrow. Well, the long and short of it all is, that I honestly pity him. He may have given sly knocks in his life, but he can't hurt *me*. I pity his ignorance, his weakness, his timidity. He has tasted the real sweetness of life no more than its bitterness; he has never dreamed, or wandered, or dared; he has never known any but mercenary affection; neither men nor women have risked aught for *him*—for his good spirits, his good looks, and his poverty. How I should like to give him, for once, a real sensation!

26th.—I took a row this morning with Theodore a couple of miles along the lake, to a point where we went ashore and lounged away an hour in the sunshine, which is still very comfortable. Poor Theodore seems troubled about many things. For one, he is troubled about me; he is actually more anxious about my future than I myself; he thinks better of me than I do of myself; he is so deucedly

conscientious, so scrupulous, so averse to giving offence or to *brusquer* any situation before it has played itself out, that he shrinks from betraying his apprehensions or asking any direct questions. But I know that he is dying to extort from me some positive profession of practical interest and faith. I catch myself in the act of taking—heaven forgive me!—a half-malicious joy in confounding his expectations—leading his generous sympathies off the scent by various extravagant protestations of mock cynicism and malignity. But in Theodore I have so firm a friend that I shall have a long row to hoe if I ever find it needful to make him forswear his devotion—abjure his admiration. He admires me—that's absolute; he takes my moral infirmities for the eccentricities of genius, and they only impart an extra flavor—a *haut goût*—to the richness of my charms. Nevertheless, I can see that he is disappointed. I have even less to show, after this lapse of years, than he had hoped. Heaven help us! little enough it must strike him as being. What an essential absurdity there is in our being friends at all. I honestly believe we shall end with hating each other. They are all very well now—our diversity, our oppugnancy, our cross purposes; now that we are at play together they serve as a theme for jollity. But when we settle down to work —ah me! for the tug of war. I wonder, as it is,

that Theodore keeps his patience with me. His education since we parted should tend logically to make him despise me. He has studied, thought, suffered, loved—loved those very plain sisters and nieces. Poor me! how should I be virtuous? I have no sisters, plain or pretty!—nothing to love, work for, live for. Friend Theodore, if you are going one of these days to despise me and drop me—in the sacred name of comfort, come to the point at once, and make an end of our common agony!

He is troubled, too, about Mr. Sloane. His attitude towards the *bonhomme* quite passes my comprehension. It's the queerest jumble of contraries. He penetrates him, contemns him—yet respects and admires him. It all comes of the poor boy's shrinking New England conscience. He's afraid to give his perceptions a fair chance, lest, forsooth, they should look over his neighbor's wall. He'll not understand that he may as well sacrifice the old man for a lamb as for a sheep. His view of the gentleman, therefore, is a perfect tissue of cobwebs—a jumble of half-way sorrows, and wide-drawn charities, and hair-breadth 'scapes from utter damnation, and sudden platitudes of generosity; fit, all of it, to make an angel curse!

"The man's a perfect egotist and fool," say I, "but I like him." Now Theodore likes him—or

rather wants to like him; but he can't reconcile it to his self-respect—fastidious deity!—to like a fool. Why the deuce can't he leave it alone altogether? It's a purely practical matter. He ought to do the duties of his place all the better for having his head clear of officious sentiment. I don't believe in disinterested service; and Theodore is too desperately bent on preserving his disinterestedness. With me, it's different. I'm perfectly free to love the *bonhomme*—for a fool. I'm neither a scribe nor a Pharisee; I'm—ah me, *what* am I?

And then, Theodore is troubled about his sisters. He's afraid he's not doing his duty by them. He thinks he ought to be with them—to be getting a larger salary, to be teaching his nieces. I'm not versed in such questions. Perhaps he ought.

MAY 3d.—This morning Theodore sent me word that he was ill and unable to get up; upon which I immediately repaired to his bedside. He had caught cold, was sick and a little feverish. I urged him to make no attempt to leave his room, and assured him that I would do what I could to reconcile Mr. Sloane to his non-attendance. This I found an easy matter. I read to him for a couple of hours, wrote four letters—one in French—and then talked a good two hours more. I have done more talking, by the way, in the last fortnight, than in any previous twelve months—much of it, too, none of the wisest, nor,

I may add, of the most fastidiously veracious. In a little discussion, two or three days ago, with Theodore, I came to the point and roundly proclaimed that in gossiping with Mr. Sloane I made no scruple, for our common satisfaction, of discreetly using the embellishments of fiction. My confession gave him "that turn," as Mrs. Gamp would say, that his present illness may be the result of it. Nevertheless, poor, dear fellow, I trust he'll be on his legs to-morrow. This afternoon, somehow, I found myself really in the humor of talking. There was something propitious in the circumstances; a hard, cold rain without, a wood-fire in the library, the *bonhomme* puffing cigarettes in his armchair, beside him a portfolio of newly imported prints and photographs, and—Theodore tucked safely away in bed. Finally, when I brought our *tête-à-tête* to a close (taking good care to understay my welcome) Mr. Sloane seized me by both hands and honored me with one of his venerable grins. "Max," he said—"you must let me call you Max—you're the most delightful man I ever knew."

Verily, there's some virtue left in me yet. I believe I fairly blushed.

"Why didn't I know you ten years ago?" the old man went on. "Here are ten years lost."

"Ten years ago, my dear Mr. Sloane," quoth Max, "I was hardly worth your knowing."

"But I did know you!" cried the *bonhomme*. "I knew you in knowing your mother."

Ah! my mother again. When the old man begins that chapter I feel like telling him to blow out his candle and go to bed.

"At all events," he continued, "we must make the most of the years that remain. I'm a poor sick old fellow, but I've no notion of dying. You'll not get tired of me and want to go away?"

"I'm devoted to you, sir," I said. "But I must be looking up some work, you know."

"Work! Bah! I'll give you work. I'll give you wages."

"I'm afraid," I said, with a smile, "that you'll want to give me the wages without the work." And then I declared that I must go up and look at poor Theodore.

The *bonhomme* still kept my hands. "I wish very much," he said, "that I could get you to love me as well as you do poor Theodore."

"Ah, don't talk about love, Mr. Sloane. I'm no lover."

"Don't you love your friend?"

"Not as he deserves."

"Nor as he loves you, perhaps?"

"He loves me, I'm afraid, far more than I deserve."

"Well, Max," my host pursued, "we can be good

friends, all the same. We don't need a hocus-pocus of false sentiment. We are *men,* aren't we?—men of sublime good sense." And just here, as the old man looked at me, the pressure of his hands deepened to a convulsive grasp, and the bloodless mask of his countenance was suddenly distorted with a nameless fear. "Ah, my dear young man!" he cried, "come and be a son to me—the son of my age and desolation! For God's sake don't leave me to pine and die alone!"

I was amazed—and I may say I was moved. Is it true, then, that this poor old heart contains such measureless depths of horror and longing? I take it that he's mortally afraid of death. I assured him on my honor that he may henceforth call upon me for any service.

8th.—Theodore's indisposition turned out more serious than I expected. He has been confined to his room till to-day. This evening he came down to the library in his dressing gown. Decidedly, Mr. Sloane is an eccentric, but hardly, as Theodore thinks, a "charming" one. There is something extremely curious in the exhibition of his caprices—the incongruous fits and starts, as it were, of his taste. For some reason, best known to himself, he took it into his head to deem it a want of delicacy, of respect, of *savoir-vivre*—of heaven knows what—that poor Theodore, who is still weak and lan-

guid, should enter the sacred precinct of his study in the vulgar drapery of a dressing-gown. The sovereign trouble with the *bonhomme* is an absolute lack of the instinct of justice. He's of the real feminine turn—I believe I have written it before—without a ray of woman's virtues. I honestly believe that I might come into his study in my night-shirt and he would smile upon it as a picturesque *déshabillé*. But for poor Theodore to-night there was nothing but scowls and frowns, and barely a civil inquiry about his health. But poor Theodore is not such a fool, either; he'll not die of a snubbing; I never said he was a weakling. Once he fairly saw from what quarter the wind blew, he bore the master's brutality with the utmost coolness and gallantry. Can it be that Mr. Sloane really wishes to drop him? The delicious old brute! He understands favor and friendship only as a selfish rapture—a reaction, an infatuation, an act of aggressive, exclusive patronage. It's not a bestowal with him, but a transfer, and half his pleasure in causing his sun to shine is that—being woefully near its setting—it will produce a number of delectable shadows. He wants to cast my shadow, I suppose, on Theodore; fortunately I'm not altogether an opaque body. Since Theodore was taken ill he has been into his room but once, and has sent him none but the scantiest messages. I, too, have been much

less attentive than I should have wished to be; but my time has not been my own. It has been, every moment of it, at Mr. Sloane's disposal. He actually runs after me; he devours me; he makes a fool of himself, and is trying hard to make one of me. I find that he will stand—that, in fact, he actually enjoys—a certain kind of humorous snubbing. He likes anything that will tickle his fancy, impart a flavor to our relations, remind him of his old odds and ends of novels and memoirs. I have fairly stepped into Theodore's shoes, and done—with what I feel in my bones to be vastly inferior skill and taste—all the reading, writing, condensing, expounding, transcribing and advising that he has been accustomed to do. I have driven with the *bonhomme;* played chess and cribbage with him; and beaten him, bullied him, contradicted him; and forced him into going out on the water under my charge. Who shall say, after this, that I haven't done my best to discourage his advances, confound his benevolence? As yet, my efforts are vain; in fact they quite turn to my own confusion. Mr. Sloane is so vastly thankful at having escaped from the lake with his life that he seems actually to look upon me as a kind of romantic preserver and protector. Faugh! what tiresome nonsense it all is! But one thing is certain, it can't last forever. Admit that he *has* cast Theodore out and taken me in. He will speedily

discover that he has made a pretty mess of it, and that he had much better have left well enough alone. He likes my reading and writing now, but in a month he'll begin to hate them. He'll miss Theodore's healthy, unerring, impersonal judgment. What an advantage that pure and luminous nature has over mine, after all. I'm for days, he's for years; he for the long run, I for the short. I, perhaps, am intended for success, but he alone for happiness. He holds in his heart a tiny sacred particle, which leavens his whole being and keeps it pure and sound—a faculty of admiration and respect. For him human nature is still a wonder and a mystery; it bears a divine stamp—Mr. Sloane's tawdry organism as well as the best.

13th.—I have refused, of course, to supplant Theodore further, in the exercise of his functions, and he has resumed his morning labors with Mr. Sloane. I, on my side, have spent these morning hours in scouring the country on that capital black mare, the use of which is one of the perquisites of Theodore's place. The days have been magnificent —the heat of the sun tempered by a murmuring, wandering wind, the whole north a mighty ecstasy of sound and verdure, the sky a far-away vault of bended blue. Not far from the mill at M., the other end of the lake, I met, for the third time, that very pretty young girl who reminds me so forcibly of

A. L. She makes so very frank and fearless a use of her eyes that I ventured to stop and bid her good-morning. She seems nothing loth to an acquaintance. She's an out-and-out barbarian in speech, but her eyes look as if they had drained the noonday heavens of their lustre. These rides do me good; I had got into a sadly worrying, brooding habit of thought.

What has got into Theodore I know not; his illness seems to have left him strangely affected. He has fits of sombre reserve, alternating with spasms of extravagant gayety. He avoids me at times for hours together, and then he comes and looks at me with an inscrutable smile, as if he were on the verge of a burst of confidence—which again is swallowed up in the darkness of his silence. Is he hatching some astounding benefit to his species? Is he working to bring about my removal to a higher sphere of action? *Nous verrons bien.*

18th.—Theodore threatens departure. He received this morning a letter from one of his sisters —the young widow—announcing her engagement to a minister whose acquaintance she has recently made, and intimating her expectation of an immediate union with the gentleman—a ceremony which would require Theodore's attendance. Theodore, in high good humor, read the letter aloud at breakfast—and to tell the truth a charming letter it was.

He then spoke of his having to go on to the wedding; a proposition to which Mr. Sloane graciously assented—but with truly startling amplitude. "I shall be sorry to lose you after so happy a connection," said the old man. Theodore turned pale, stared a moment, and then, recovering his color and his composure, declared that he should have no objection in life to coming back.

"Bless your soul!" cried the *bonhomme,* "you don't mean to say you'll leave your little sister all alone?"

To which Theodore replied that he would arrange for her to live with his brother-in-law. "It's the only proper thing," he declared, in a tone which was not to be gainsaid. It has come to this, then, that Mr. Sloane actually wants to turn him out of the house. Oh, the precious old fool! He keeps smiling an uncanny smile, which means, as I read it, that if the poor boy once departs he shall never return on the old footing—for all his impudence!

20th.—This morning, at breakfast, we had a terrific scene. A letter arrives for Theodore; he opens it, turns white and red, frowns, falters, and then informs us that the clever widow has broken off her engagement. No wedding, therefore, and no departure for Theodore. The *bonhomme* was furious. In his fury he took the liberty of calling poor Mrs. Parker (the sister) a very impolite name.

Theodore rebuked him, with perfect good taste, and kept his temper.

"If my opinions don't suit you, Mr. Lisle," the old man broke out, "and my mode of expressing them displeases you, you know you can easily remove yourself from within my jurisdiction."

"My dear Mr. Sloane," said Theodore, "your opinions, as a general rule, interest me deeply, and have never ceased to act most beneficially upon the formation of my own. Your mode of expressing them is charming, and I wouldn't for the world, after all our pleasant intercourse, separate from you in bitterness. Only, I repeat, your qualification of my sister's conduct was perfectly uncalled for. If you knew her, you would be the first to admit it."

There was something in Theodore's aspect and manner, as he said these words, which puzzled me all the morning. After dinner, finding myself alone with him, I told him I was glad he was not obliged to go away. He looked at me with the mysterious smile I have mentioned—a smile which actually makes him handsome—thanked me and fell into meditation. As this bescribbled chronicle is the record of my follies, as well as of my *haut faits,* I needn't hesitate to say that, for a moment, I was keenly exasperated. What business has poor, transparent Theodore to put on the stony mask of the sphinx and play the inscrutable? What right has

he to do so with me especially, in whom he has always professed an absolute confidence? Just as I was about to cry out, "Come, my dear boy, this affectation of mystery has lasted quite long enough—favor me at last with the result of your cogitation!" —as I was on the point of thus expressing my impatience of his continued solemnity of demeanor, the oracle at last addressed itself to utterance.

"You see, my dear Max," he said, "I can't, in justice to myself, go away in obedience to any such intimation as that vouchsafed to me this morning. What do you think of my actual footing here?"

Theodore's actual footing here seemed to me essentially uncomfortable; of course I said so.

"Nay, I assure you it's not," he answered. "I should feel, on the contrary, very uncomfortable to think that I'd come away, except by my own choice. You see a man can't afford to cheapen himself. What are you laughing at?"

"I'm laughing, in the first place, my dear fellow, to hear on your lips the language of cold calculation; and in the second place, at your odd notion of the process by which a man keeps himself up in the market."

"I assure you that it's the correct notion. I came here as a favor to Mr. Sloane; it was expressly understood so. The occupation was distasteful to me. I had from top to bottom to accommodate my-

self to my duties. I had to compromise with a dozen convictions, preferences, prejudices. I don't take such things easily; I take them hard; and when once the labor is achieved I can't consent to have it thrown away. If Mr. Sloane needed me then, he needs me still. I am ignorant of any change having taken place in his intentions, or in his means of satisfying them. I came not to amuse him, but to do a certain work; I hope to remain until the work is completed. To go away sooner is to make a confession of incapacity which, I protest, costs too great a sacrifice to my vanity."

Theodore spoke these words with a face which I have never seen him wear; a fixed, mechanical smile; a hard, dry glitter in his eyes; a harsh, strident tone in his voice—in his whole physiognomy a gleam, as it were, a note of defiance. Now I confess that for defiance I have never been conscious of an especial relish. When I'm defied, I'm ugly. "My dear man," I replied, "your sentiments do you prodigious credit. Your very ingenious theory of your present situation, as well as your extremely pronounced sense of your personal value, are calculated to insure you a degree of practical success which can very well dispense with the furtherance of my poor good wishes." Oh, the grimness of his listening smile—and I suppose I may add of my own physiognomy! But I have ceased to be

puzzled. Theodore's conduct for the past ten days is suddenly illumined with a backward, lurid ray. Here are a few plain truths, which it behooves me to take to heart—commit to memory. Theodore is jealous of me. Theodore hates me. Theodore has been seeking for the past three months to see his name written, last but not least, in a certain testamentary document: "Finally, I bequeath to my dear young friend, Theodore Lisle, in return for invaluable services and unfailing devotion, the bulk of my property, real and personal, consisting of——" (hereupon follows an exhaustive enumeration of houses, lands, public securities, books, pictures, horses, and dogs). It is for this that he has toiled, and watched, and prayed; submitted to intellectual weariness and spiritual torture; made his terms with levity, blasphemy, and insult. For this he sets his teeth and tightens his grasp; for this he'll fight. Merciful powers! it's an immense weight off one's mind. There are nothing, then, but vulgar, common laws; no sublime exceptions, no transcendent anomalies. Theodore's a knave, a hypo—nay, nay; stay, irreverent hand!—Theodore's a *man!* Well, that's all I want. *He* wants fight—he shall have it. Have I got, at last, my simple, natural emotion?

21st.—I have lost no time. This evening, late, after I had heard Theodore go to his room (I had left the library early, on the pretext of having let-

ters to write) I repaired to Mr. Sloane, who had not yet gone to bed, and informed him that it is necessary I shall at once leave him, and seek some occupation in New York. He felt the blow; it brought him straight down on his marrow-bones. He went through the whole gamut of his arts and graces; he blustered, whimpered, entreated, flattered. He tried to drag in Theodore's name; but this I, of course, prevented. But, finally, why, *why,* WHY, after all my promises of fidelity, must I thus cruelly desert him? Then came my supreme avowal: I have spent my last penny; while I stay, I'm a beggar. The remainder of this extraordinary scene I have no power to describe: how the *bonhomme,* touched, inflamed, inspired, by the thought of my destitution, and at the same time annoyed, perplexed, bewildered at having to commit himself to any practical alleviation of it, worked himself into a nervous frenzy which deprived him of a clear sense of the value of his words and his actions; how I, prompted by the irresistible spirit of my desire to leap astride of his weakness, and ride it hard into the goal of my dreams, cunningly contrived to keep his spirit at the fever point, so that strength, and reason, and resistance should burn themselves out. I shall probably never again have such a sensation as I enjoyed to-night—actually feel a heated human heart throbbing, and turning, and struggling in my

grasp; know its pants, its spasms, its convulsions, and its final senseless quiescence. At half-past one o'clock, Mr. Sloane got out of his chair, went to his secretary, opened a private drawer, and took out a folded paper. "This is my will," he said, "made some seven weeks ago. If you'll stay with me, I'll destroy it."

"Really, Mr. Sloane," I said, "if you think my purpose is to exert any pressure upon your testamentary inclinations——"

"I'll tear it in pieces," he cried; "I'll burn it up. I shall be as sick as a dog to-morrow; but I'll do it. A-a-h!"

He clapped his hand to his side, as if in sudden, overwhelming pain, and sank back fainting into his chair. A single glance assured me that he was unconscious. I possessed myself of the paper, opened it, and perceived that the will is almost exclusively in Theodore's favor. For an instant, a savage, puerile feeling of hate sprang erect in my bosom, and I came within an ace of obeying my foremost impulse —that of casting the document into the fire. Fortunately, my reason overtook my passion, though for a moment 'twas an even race. I replaced the paper in the secretary, closed it, and rang the bell for Robert (the old man's servant). Before he came I stood watching the poor, pale remnant of mortality before me, and wondering whether those feeble life-

gasps were numbered. He was as white as a sheet, grimacing with pain—horribly ugly. Suddenly, he opened his eyes; they met my own; I fell on my knees and took his hands. They closed on mine with a grasp strangely akin to the rigidity of death. Nevertheless, since then he has revived, and has relapsed again into a comparatively healthy sleep. Robert seems to know how to deal with him.

22d.—Mr. Sloane is seriously ill—out of his mind and unconscious of people's identity. The doctor has been here, off and on, all day, but this evening reports improvement. I have kept out of the old man's room, and confined myself to my own, reflecting largely upon the odd contingency of his immediate death. Does Theodore know of the will? Would it occur to him to divide the property? Would it occur to me, in his place? We met at dinner, and talked in a grave, desultory, friendly fashion. After all, he's an excellent fellow. I don't hate him. I don't even dislike him. He jars on me, *il m'agace;* but that's no reason why I should do him an evil turn. Nor shall I. The property is a fixed idea, that's all. I shall get it if I can. We're fairly matched. Before heaven, no, we're not fairly matched! Theodore has a conscience.

23d.—I'm restless and nervous—and for good reasons. Scribbling here keeps me quiet. This morning Mr. Sloane is better; feeble and uncertain

in mind, but unmistakably on the mend. I may confess now that I feel relieved of a weighty burden. Last night I hardly slept a wink. I lay awake listening to the pendulum of my clock. It seemed to say "He lives—he dies." I fully expected to have it stop suddenly at *dies*. But it kept going all the morning, and to a decidedly more lively tune. In the afternoon the old man sent for me. I found him in his great muffled bed, with his face the color of damp chalk, and his eyes glowing faintly, like torches half-stamped out. I was forcibly struck with the utter loneliness of his lot. For all human attendance, my villainous self grinning at his bedside, and old Robert without, listening, doubtless, at the keyhole. The *bonhomme* stared at me stupidly; then seemed to know me, and greeted me with a sickly smile. It was some moments before he was able to speak. At last he faintly bade me to descend into the library, open the secret drawer of the secretary (which he contrived to direct me how to do), possess myself of his will, and burn it up. He appears to have forgotten his having removed it, night before last. I told him that I had an insurmountable aversion to any personal dealings with the document. He smiled, patted the back of my hand, and requested me, in that case, to get it, at least, and bring it to him. I couldn't deny him that favor? No, I couldn't, indeed. I went down to the library,

therefore, and on entering the room found Theodore standing by the fireplace with a bundle of papers. The secretary was open. I stood still, looking from the ruptured cabinet to the documents in his hand. Among them I recognized, by its shape and size, the paper of which I had intended to possess myself. Without delay I walked straight up to him. He looked surprised, but not confused. "I'm afraid I shall have to trouble you," I said, "to surrender one of those papers."

"Surrender, Max? To anything of your own you are perfectly welcome. I didn't know, however, that you made use of Mr. Sloane's secretary. I was looking up some notes of my own making, in which I conceive I have a property."

"This is what I want, Theodore," I said; and I drew the will, unfolded, from between his hands. As I did so his eyes fell upon the superscription, "Last Will and Testament. March. F. S." He flushed a splendid furious crimson. Our eyes met. Somehow—I don't know how or why, or for that matter why not—I burst into a violent peal of laughter. Theodore stood staring, with two hot, bitter tears in his eyes.

"Of course you think," he said, "that I came to ferret out that thing."

I shrugged my shoulders—those of my body only. I confess, morally, I was on my knees with contri-

tion, but there was a fascination in it—a fatality. I remembered that in the hurry of my movements, the other evening, I had replaced the will simply in one of the outer drawers of the cabinet, among Theodore's own papers; doubtless where he had taken it up. "Mr. Sloane sent me for it," I said.

"Very good, I'm glad to hear he's well enough to think of such things."

"He means to destroy it."

"I hope, then, he has another made."

"Mentally, I suppose he has."

"Unfortunately, his weakness isn't mental—or exclusively so."

"Oh, he'll live to make a dozen more," I said. "Do you know the purport of this one?"

Theodore's color, by this time, had died away into a sombre paleness. He shook his head. The doggedness of the movement provoked me. I wished to arouse his curiosity. "I have his commission," I rejoined, "to destroy it."

Theodore smiled superbly. "It's not a task I envy you," he said.

"I should think not—especially if you knew the import of the will." He stood with folded arms, regarding me with the remote contempt of his rich blue eyes. I couldn't stand it. "Come, it's your property," I cried. "You're sole legatee. I give it up to you." And I thrust the paper into his hand.

He received it mechanically; but after a pause, bethinking himself, he unfolded it and cast his eyes over the contents. Then he slowly refolded it and held it a moment with a tremulous hand. "You say that Mr. Sloane directed you to destroy it?" he finally asked.

"I say so."

"And that you know the contents?"

"Exactly."

"And that you were about to comply?"

"On the contrary, I declined."

Theodore fixed his eyes, for a moment, on the superscription, and then raised them again to my face. "Thank you, Max," he said. "You've left me a real satisfaction." He tore the sheet across and threw the bits into the fire. We stood watching them burn. "Now he can make another," said Theodore.

"Twenty others," I replied.

"No," said Theodore, "you'll take care of that."

"Upon my soul," I cried, "you're bitter!"

"No, not now. I worked off all my bitterness in these few words."

"Well, in consideration of that, I excuse them."

"Just as you please."

"Ah," said I, "there's a little bitterness left!"

"No, nothing but indifference. Farewell." And he put out his hand.

"Are you going away?"

"Of course I am. Farewell."

"Farewell, then. But isn't your departure rather sudden?"

"I ought to have gone three weeks ago—three weeks ago." I had taken his hand, he pulled it away, covered his face, and suddenly burst into tears.

"Is *that* indifference?" I asked.

"It's something you'll never know," he cried. "It's shame! I'm not sorry you should see it. It will suggest to you, perhaps, that my heart has never been in this filthy contest. Let me assure you, at any rate, that it hasn't; that it has had nothing but scorn for the base perversion of my pride and my ambition. These tears are tears of joy at their return—the return of the prodigals! Tears of sorrow—sorrow——"

He was unable to go on. He sank into a chair, burying his face in his handkerchief.

"For God's sake, Theodore," I said, "stick to the joy."

He rose to his feet again. "Well," he said, "it was for your sake that I parted with my self-respect; with your assistance I recover it."

"How for my sake?"

"For whom but you would I have gone as far as I did? For what other purpose than that of keeping our friendship whole would I have borne you

company into this narrow pass? A man whom I loved less I would long since have parted with. You were needed—you and your incomparable gifts —to bring me to this. You ennobled, exalted, enchanted the struggle. I *did* value my prospects of coming into Mr. Sloane's property. I valued them for my poor sister's sake, as well as for my own, so long as they were the natural reward of conscientious service, and not the prize of hypocrisy and cunning. With another man than you I never would have contested such a prize. But I loved you, even as my rival. You played with me, deceived me, betrayed me. I held my ground, hoping and longing to purge you of your error by the touch of your old pledges of affection. I carried them in my heart. For Mr. Sloane, from the moment that, under your magical influence, he revealed his extraordinary foibles, I had nothing but contempt."

"And for me now?"

"Don't ask me. I don't trust myself."

"Hate, I suppose."

"Is that the best you can imagine? Farewell."

"Is it a serious farewell—farewell forever?"

"How can there be any other?"

"I'm sorry that such should be your point of view. It's characteristic. All the more reason then that I should say a word in self-defence. You accuse me of having 'played with you, deceived you, betrayed

you.' It seems to me that you're quite off the track. You say you loved me. If so, you ought to love me still. It wasn't for my virtue; for I never had any, or pretended to any. In anything I have done recently, therefore, there has been no inconsistency. I never pretended to love you. I don't understand the word, in the sense you attach to it. I don't understand the feeling, between men. To me, love means quite another thing. You give it a meaning of your own; you enjoy the profit of your invention; it's no more than just that you should pay the penalty. Only, it seems to me rather hard that *I* should pay it." Theodore remained silent; but his brow slowly contracted into an inexorable frown. "Is it still a 'serious farewell?'" I went on. "It seems a pity. After this clearing up, it actually seems to me that I shall be on better terms with you. No man can have a deeper appreciation of your excellent faculties, a keener enjoyment of your society, your talk. I should very much regret the loss of them."

"Have we, then, all this while," said Theodore, "understood each other so little?"

"Don't say 'we' and 'each other.' I think I have understood you."

"Very likely. It's not for want of my having confessed myself."

"Well, Theodore, I do you justice. To me you've

always been over generous. Try now, and be just."

Still he stood silent, with his cold, hard frown. It was plain that, if he was to come back to me, it would be from a vast distance. What he was going to answer I know not. The door opened, and Robert appeared, pale, trembling, his eyes starting in his head.

"I verily believe, gentlemen," he cried, "that poor Mr. Sloane is dead in his bed."

There was a moment's perfect silence. "Amen," said I. "Yes, Theodore, try and be just." Mr. Sloane had quietly died in my absence.

24th.—Theodore went up to town this morning, having shaken hands with me in silence before he started. Doctor Jones, and Brookes the attorney, have been very officious; and, by their advice, I have telegraphed to a certain Miss Meredith, a maiden lady, by their account the nearest of kin; or, in other words, simply a discarded half-niece of the defunct. She telegraphs back that she will arrive in person for the funeral. I shall remain till she comes. I have lost a fortune; but have I irretrievably lost a friend? I'm sure I can't say.

BENVOLIO

BENVOLIO

I

ONCE upon a time (as if he had lived in a fairy tale) there was a very interesting young man. This is not a fairy tale, and yet our young man was, in some respects, as pretty a fellow as any fairy prince. I call him interesting because his type of character is one I have always found it agreeable to observe. If you fail to consider him so, I shall be willing to confess that the fault is mine and not his; I shall have told my story with too little skill.

His name was Benvolio; that is, it was not; but we shall call him so for the sake both of convenience and of picturesqueness. He was more than twenty-five years old, but he was not yet thirty-five; he had a little property; he followed no regular profession. His personal appearance was in the highest degree prepossessing. Having said this, it were perhaps well that I should let you—you especially, madam—suppose that he exactly corresponded to your idea

of a well-favored young man; but I am bound to explain definitely wherein it was that he resembled a fairy prince, and I need furthermore to make a record of certain little peculiarities and anomalies in which it is probable that your brilliant conception would be deficient. Benvolio was slim and fair, with clustering locks, remarkably fine eyes, and such a frank, expressive smile that, on the journey through life, it was almost as serviceable to its owner as the magic key, or the enchanted ring, or the wishing-cap, or any other bauble of necromantic properties. Unfortunately this charming smile was not always at his command, and its place was sometimes occupied by a very dusky and ill-conditioned frown, which rendered the young man no service whatever —not even that of frightening people; for though it expressed extreme irritation and impatience, it was characterized by the brevity of contempt, and the only revenge upon disagreeable things and offensive people that it seemed to express a desire for on Benvolio's part was that of forgetting and ignoring them with the utmost possible celerity. It never made any one tremble, though now and then it perhaps made sensitive people murmur an imprecation or two. You might have supposed from Benvolio's manner, when he was in good humor (which was the greater part of the time), from his brilliant, intelligent glance, from his easy, irresponsible step,

and in especial from the sweet, clear, lingering, caressing tone of his voice—the voice as it were of a man whose fortune has been made for him, and who assumes, a trifle egotistically, that the rest of the world is equally at leisure to share with him the sweets of life, to pluck the wayside flowers, and chase the butterflies afield—you might have supposed, I say, from all this luxurious assurance of demeanor, that our hero really had the wishing-cap sitting invisible on his handsome brow, or was obliged only to close his knuckles together a moment to exert an effective pressure upon the magic ring. The young man, I have said, was compounded of many anomalies; I may say more exactly that he was a tissue of absolute contradictions. He did possess the magic ring, in a certain fashion; he possessed, in other words, the poetic imagination. Everything that fancy could do for him was done in perfection. It gave him immense satisfactions; it transfigured the world; it made very common objects sometimes seem radiantly beautiful, and it converted beautiful ones into infinite sources of intoxication. Benvolio had what is called the poetic temperament. It is rather out of fashion to describe a man in these terms; but I believe, in spite of much evidence to the contrary, that there are poets still; and if we may call a spade a spade, why should we not call such a person as Benvolio a poet?

These contradictions that I speak of ran through his whole nature, and they were perfectly apparent in his habits, in his manners, in his conversation, and even in his person. It was as if the souls of two very different men had been thrown together in the same mould and they had agreed, for convenience' sake, to use the very vulgar phrase of the day, to run the machine in alternation. The machine with Benvolio was always the imagination; but in his different moods it kept a very different tune. To an acute observer his face itself would have betrayed these variations; and it is certain that his dress, his talk, his way of spending his time, one day and another, abundantly indicated them. Sometimes he looked very young—rosy, radiant, blooming, younger than his years. Then suddenly, as the light struck his head in a particular manner, you would see that his golden locks contained a surprising number of silver threads; and with your attention quickened by this discovery, you would proceed to detect something grave and discreet in his smile—something vague and ghostly, like the dim adumbration of the darker half of the lunar disk. You might have met Benvolio, in certain moods, dressed like a man of the highest fashion—wearing his hat on his ear, a rose in his buttonhole, a wonderful intaglio or an antique Syracusan coin, by way of a pin, in his cravat. Then, on the mor-

row, you would have espied him braving the sunshine in a rusty scholar's coat, with his hat pulled over his brow—a costume wholly at odds with flowers and gems. It was all a matter of fancy; but his fancy was a weather-cock and faced east or west, as the wind blew. His conversation matched his coat and trousers; he talked one day the talk of the town; he chattered, he gossiped, he asked questions and told stories; you would have said that he was a charming fellow for a dinner party or the pauses of a cotillon. The next he either talked philosophy or politics, or said nothing at all; he was absent and indifferent; he was thinking his own thoughts; he had a book in his pocket, and evidently he was composing one in his head. At home he lived in two chambers. One was an immense room hung with pictures, lined with books, draped with rugs and tapestries, decorated with a multitude of ingenious devices (for of all these things he was very fond); the other, his sleeping-room, was almost as bare as a monastic cell. It had a meagre little strip of carpet on the floor, and a dozen well-thumbed volumes of classic poets and sages on the mantel-shelf. On the wall hung three or four coarsely engraved portraits of the most exemplary of these worthies; these were the only ornaments. But the room had the charm of a great window, in a deep embrasure, looking out upon a tangled, silent, moss-grown garden,

and in the embrasure stood the little ink-blotted table at which Benvolio did most of his poetic scribbling. The windows of his sumptuous sitting-room commanded a wide public square, where people were always passing and lounging, where military music used to play on vernal nights, and half the life of the great town went forward. At the risk of your thinking our hero a sad idler, I will say that he spent an inordinate amount of time in gazing out of these windows (on either side), with his elbows on the sill. The garden did not belong to the house which he inhabited, but to a neighboring one, and the proprietor, a graceless old miser, was very chary of permits to visit his domain. But Benvolio's fancy used to wander through the alleys without stirring the long arms of the untended plants, and to bend over the heavy-headed flowers without leaving a footprint on their beds. It was here that his happiest thoughts came to him—that inspiration (as we may say, speaking of a man of the poetic temperament) descended upon him in silence, and for certain divine, appreciable moments stood poised along the course of his scratching quill. It was not, however, that he had not spent some very charming hours in the larger, richer apartment. He used to receive his friends there—sometimes in great numbers, sometimes at boisterous, many-voiced suppers, which lasted far into the night. When these enter-

tainments were over he never made a direct transition to his little scholar's cell, with its garden view. He went out and wandered for an hour through the dark, sleeping streets of the town, ridding himself of the fumes of wine, and feeling not at all tipsy, but intensely, portentously sober. More than once, when he came back and prepared to go to bed, he had seen the first faint glow of dawn trembling upward over the tree tops of his garden. His friends, coming to see him, often found the greater room empty, and, advancing, pounded at the door of his chamber. But he frequently kept quiet, not desiring in the least to see them, knowing exactly what they were going to say, and not thinking it worth hearing. Then, hearing them stride away, and the outer door close behind them, he would come forth and take a turn in his slippers, over his Persian carpets, and glance out of the window and see his defeated visitant stand scratching his chin in the sunny square, and then laugh lightly to himself—as is said to be the habit of the scribbling tribe in moments of production.

Although he had a family he enjoyed extreme liberty. His family was so large, his brothers and sisters so numerous, that he could absent himself constantly and be little missed. Sometimes he used this privilege freely; he tired of people whom he had seen very often, and he had seen, of course, an

immense deal of his family. At others he was extremely domestic; he suddenly found solitude depressing, and it seemed to him that if one sought society as a refuge, one needed to be on familiar terms with it, and that with no one was familiarity so natural as among people who had grown up at a common fireside. Nevertheless it frequently occurred to him—for sooner or later everything occurred to him—that he was too independent and irresponsible; that he would be happier if his hands were sometimes tied, so long as the knot were not too tight. His curiosity about all things was great, and he satisfied it largely whenever the occasion offered itself; but as the years went by this pursuit of impartial science appeared to produce a singular result. He became conscious of an intellectual condition similar to that of a palate which has lost its relish. To a man with a disordered appetite all things taste alike, and so it seemed to Benvolio that his imagination was losing its sense of a better and a worse. It had still its glowing moments, its feasts and its holidays; but, on the whole, the spectacle of human life was growing flat and stale. This is simply a wordy way of expressing that pregnantly synthetic fact—Benvolio was *blasé*. He knew it, he knew it betimes, and he regretted it acutely. He believed that such a consummation was not absolutely necessary—especially at his time of life; for

he said to himself that there *must* be a way of using one's faculties which will keep their edges sharp. There was a certain possible economy in one's dealings with life which would make the two ends meet at the last. What was it? The wise man's duty was to find it out. One of its rudiments, he believed, was that one grows tired of one's self sooner than of anything else in the world. Idleness, every one admitted, was the greatest of follies; but idleness was subtle and exacted tribute under a hundred plausible disguises. One was often idle when one seemed to be ardently occupied; one was always idle (it might be concluded) when one's occupations had not a high aim. One was idle therefore when one was working simply for one's self. Curiosity for curiosity's sake, art for art's sake, these were essentially broken-winded steeds. *Ennui* was at the end of everything that did not entangle us somehow with human life. To get entangled, therefore, pondered Benvolio, should be the wise man's aim. Poor Benvolio had to ponder all this, because, as I say, he was a poet and not a man of action. A fine fellow of the latter stamp would have solved the problem without knowing it, and bequeathed to his fellow men not cold formulas but vivid examples. But Benvolio had often said to himself that he was born to imagine great things—not to do them; and he had said this by no means sadly, for, on the whole,

he was very well content with his portion. Imagine them he determined he would, and on a most magnificent scale. He would entangle himself at least in a mesh of work—work of the most profound and elaborate sort. He would handle great ideas, he would enunciate great truths, he would write immortal verses. In all this there was a large amount of talent and a liberal share of ambition. I will not say that Benvolio was a man of genius; it may seem to make the distinction too cheap; but he was at any rate a man with an intellectual passion; and if, being near him, you had been able to listen intently enough, he would, like the great people of his craft, have seemed to emit something of that vague, magical murmur—the voice of the infinite—which lurks in the involutions of a sea-shell. He himself, by the way, had once made use of this little simile, and had written a poem in which it was melodiously set forth that the poetic minds scattered about the world correspond to the little shells one picks up on the beach, all resonant with the echo of ocean. The whole thing was, of course, rounded off with the sands of time, the waves of history, and other harmonious conceits.

II

But (as you are naturally expecting to hear) Benvolio knew perfectly well that there is one way of getting entangled which is far more effectual than any other—the way that a charming woman points out. Benvolio was of course in love. Who was his mistress, you ask (I flatter myself with some impatience), and was she pretty, was she kind, was he successful? Hereby hangs my tale, which I must relate categorically.

Benvolio's mistress was a lady whom (as I cannot tell you her real name) it will be quite in keeping to speak of as the Countess. The Countess was a young widow, who had some time since divested herself of her mourning weeds—which indeed she had never worn but very lightly. She was rich, extremely pretty, and free to do as pleased her. She was passionately fond of pleasure and admiration, and they gushed forth at her feet in unceasing streams. Her beauty was not of the conventional

type, but it was dazzlingly brilliant; few faces were more expressive, more fascinating. Hers was never the same for two days together; it reflected her momentary circumstances with extraordinary vividness, and in knowing her you had the advantage of knowing a dozen different women. She was clever and accomplished, and had the credit of being perfectly amiable; indeed, it was difficult to imagine a person combining a greater number of the precious gifts of nature and fortune. She represented felicity, gaiety, success; she was made to charm, to play a part, to exert a sway. She lived in a great house, behind high verdure-muffled walls, where other Countesses, in other years, had been the charm and the envy of their time. It was an antiquated quarter, into which the tide of commerce had lately begun to roll heavily; but the turbid waves of trade broke in vain against the Countess's enclosure, and if in her garden and her drawing-room you heard the deep uproar of the city, it was only as a vague undertone to sweeter things—to music, and witty talk, and tender dialogue. There was something very striking in this unyielding, elegant privacy, in the midst of public toil and traffic.

Benvolio was a great deal at this lady's house; he rarely desired better entertainment. I spoke just now of privacy; but privacy was not what he found there, nor what he wished to find. He went there

when he wished to learn with the least trouble what was going on in the world, for the talk of the people the Countess generally had about her was an epitome of the gossip, the rumors, the interests, the hopes and fears of polite society. She was a thoroughly liberal hostess; all she asked was to be entertained; if you would contribute to the common fund of amusement, of discussion, you were a welcome guest. Sooner or later, among your fellow-guests, you encountered every one of consequence. There were frivolous people and wise people; people whose fortune was in their pockets, and people whose fortune was in their brains; people deeply concerned in public affairs, and people concerned only with the fit of their garments or with the number of the people who looked round when their names were announced. Benvolio, who liked a large and various social spectacle, appreciated all this; but he was best pleased, as a general thing, when he found the Countess alone. This was often his fortune, for the simple reason that when the Countess expected him, she invariably had herself refused to every one else. This is almost an answer to your inquiry whether Benvolio was successful in his suit. As yet, strictly speaking, there was no suit. Benvolio had never made love to the Countess. This sounds very strange, but it is nevertheless true. He was in love with her; he thought her the most charm-

ing creature conceivable; he spent hours with her alone by her own orders; he had had opportunity—he had been up to his neck in opportunity—and yet he had never said to her, as would have seemed so natural, "Dear Countess, I beseech you to be my wife." If you are surprised, I may also confide to you that the Countess was; and surprise under the circumstances very easily became displeasure. It is by no means certain that if Benvolio had made the little speech we have just imagined, the Countess would have fallen into his arms, confessed to a mutual flame, and rung in *finis* to our tale, with the wedding bells. But she nevertheless expected him in civility to pay her this supreme compliment. Her answer would be—what it might be; but his silence was a permanent offence. Every man, roughly speaking, had asked the Countess to marry him, and every man had been told that she was much obliged, but had no idea of marrying. Now here, with the one man who failed to ask her, she had a great idea of it, and his forbearance gave her more to think about than all the importunities of all her other suitors. The truth was she liked Benvolio extremely, and his independence rendered him excellent service. The Countess had a very lively fancy, and she had fingered, nimbly enough, the volume of the young man's merits. She was by nature a trifle cold; she rarely lost her head; she measured each

step as she took it; she had had little fancies and incipient passions; but on the whole she had thought much more about love than felt it. She had often tried to form an image mentally of the sort of man it would be well for her to love—for so it was she expressed it. She had succeeded but indifferently, and her imagination had gone a-begging until the day she met Benvolio. Then it seemed to her that her quest was ended—her prize gained. This nervous, ardent, deep-eyed youth struck her as the harmonious counterpart of her own facile personality. This conviction rested with the Countess on a fine sense of propriety which it would be vain to attempt to analyze; he was different from herself and from the other men who surrounded her, and to be complete it seemed to her that she ought to have something of that sort in her train. In the old days she would have had it in the person of a troubadour or a knight-errant; now, a woman who was in her own right a considerable social figure might conveniently annex it in the form of a husband. I don't know how good a judge the Countess was of such matters, but she believed that the world would hear of Benvolio. She had beauty, ancestry, money, luxury, but she had not genius; and if genius was to be had, why not secure it, and complete the list? This is doubtless a rather coarse statement of the Countess's argument; but you have it thrown in gratis, as it

were; for all I am bound to tell you is that this charming young woman took a fancy to this clever young man, and that she used to cry sometimes for a quarter of a minute when she imagined he didn't care for her. Her tears were wasted, because he did care for her—more even than she would have imagined if she had taken a favorable view of the case. But Benvolio, I cannot too much repeat, was an exceedingly complex character, and there was many a hiatus in the logic of his conduct. The Countess charmed him, excited him, interested him; he did her abundant justice—more than justice; but at the end of all he felt that she failed to satisfy him. If a man could have half a dozen wives—and Benvolio had once maintained, poetically, that he ought to have—the Countess would do very well for one of them—possibly even for the best of them. But she would not serve for all seasons and all moods; she needed a complement, an alternative—what the French call a *repoussoir*. One day he was going to see her, knowing that he was expected. There was to be a number of other people—in fact, a very brilliant assembly; but Benvolio knew that a certain touch of the hand, a certain glance of the eye, a certain caress of the voice, would be reserved for him alone. Happy Benvolio, you will say, to be going about the world with such charming secrets as this locked up in his young heart! Happy Benvolio in-

deed; but mark how he trifled with his happiness. He went to the Countess's gate, but he went no further; he stopped, stood there a moment, frowning intensely, and biting the finger of his glove; then suddenly he turned and strode away in the opposite direction. He walked and walked and left the town behind him. He went his way till he reached the country, and here he bent his steps toward a little wood which he knew very well, and whither indeed, on a spring afternoon, when she had taken a fancy to play at shepherd and shepherdess, he had once come with the Countess. He flung himself on the grass, on the edge of the wood—not in the same place where he had lain at the Countess's feet, pulling sonnets out of his pocket and reading them one by one; a little stream flowed beside him; opposite, the sun was declining; the distant city lay before him, lifting its towers and chimneys against the reddening western sky. The twilight fell and deepened and the stars came out. Benvolio lay there thinking that he preferred them to the Countess's wax candles. He went back to town in a farmer's wagon, talking with the honest rustic who drove it.

Very much in this way, when he had been on the point of knocking at the gate of the Countess's heart and asking ardently to be admitted, he had paused, stood frowning, and then turned short and rambled

away into solitude. She never knew how near, two or three times, he had come. Two or three times she had accused him of being rude, and this was nothing but the backward swing of the pendulum. One day it seemed to her that he was altogether too vexatious, and she reproached herself with her good nature. She had made herself too cheap; such conduct was beneath her dignity; she would take another tone. She closed her door to him, and bade her people say, whenever he came, that she was engaged. At first Benvolio only wondered. Oddly enough, he was not what is commonly called sensitive; he never supposed you meant to offend him; not being at all impertinent himself, he was not on the watch for impertinence in others. Only, when he fairly caught you in the act he was immensely disgusted. Therefore, as I say, he simply wondered what had suddenly made the Countess so busy; then he remembered certain other charming persons whom he knew, and went to see how the world wagged with them. But they rendered the Countess eminent service: she gained by comparison, and Benvolio began to miss her. All that other charming women were who led the life of the world (as it is called) the Countess was in a superior, in a perfect degree; she was the ripest fruit of a high civilization; her companions and rivals, beside her, had but a pallid bloom, an acrid savor. Benvolio had a

relish in all things for the best, and he found himself breathing sighs under the Countess's darkened windows. He wrote to her asking why in the world she treated him so cruelly, and then she knew that her charm was working. She was careful not to answer his letter, and to have him refused at her gate as inexorably as ever. It is an ill wind that blows nobody good, and Benvolio, one night after his dismissal, wandered about the moonlit streets till nearly morning, composing the finest verses he had ever produced. The subscribers to the magazine to which he sent them were at least the gainers. But unlike many poets, Benvolio did not on this occasion bury his passion in his poem; or if he did, its ghost was stalking abroad the very next night. He went again to the Countess's gate, and again it was closed in his face. So, after a very moderate amount of hesitation, he bravely (and with a dexterity which surprised him) scaled her garden wall and dropped down in the moonshine, upon her lawn. I don't know whether she was expecting him, but if she had been, the matter could not have been better arranged. She was sitting in a little niche of shrubbery, with no protector but a microscopic lap-dog. She pretended to be scandalized at his audacity, but his audacity carried the hour. "This time certainly," thought the Countess, "he will make his declaration. He didn't jump that wall, at the risk of his neck,

simply to ask me for a cup of tea." Not a bit of it; Benvolio was devoted, but he was not more explicit than before. He declared that this was the happiest hour of his life; that there was a charming air of romance in his position; that, honestly, he thanked the Countess for having made him desperate; that he would never come to see her again but by the garden wall; that something, to-night—what was it?—was vastly becoming to her; that he devoutly hoped she would receive no one else; that his admiration for her was unbounded; that the stars, finally, had a curious pink light! He looked at her, through the flower-scented dusk, with admiring eyes; but he looked at the stars as well; he threw back his head and folded his arms, and let the conversation lag while he examined the constellations. He observed also the long shafts of light proceeding from the windows of the house, as they fell upon the lawn and played among the shrubbery. The Countess had always thought him a strange man, but to-night she thought him stranger than ever. She became satirical, and the point of her satire was that he was after all but a dull fellow; that his admiration was a poor compliment; that he would do well to turn his attention to astronomy! In answer to this he came perhaps (to the Countess's sense) as near as he had ever come to making a declaration.

"Dear lady," he said, "you don't begin to know how much I admire you!"

She left her place at this, and walked about her lawn, looking at him askance while he talked, trailing her embroidered robe over the grass, and fingering the folded petals of her flowers. He made a sort of sentimental profession of faith; he assured her that she represented his ideal of a certain sort of woman. This last phrase made her pause a moment and stare at him, wide-eyed. "Oh, I mean the finest sort," he cried—"the sort that exerts the widest sway. You represent the world and everything that the world can give, and you represent them at their best—in their most generous, most graceful, most inspiring form. If a man were a revolutionist, you would reconcile him to society. You are a divine embodiment of all the amenities, the refinements, the complexities of life! You are the flower of urbanity, of culture, of tradition! You are the product of so many influences that it widens one's horizon to know you; of you too it is true that to admire you is a liberal education! Your charm is irresistible; I never approach you without feeling it."

Compliments agreed with the Countess, as we may say; they not only made her happier, but they made her better. It became a matter of conscience with her to deserve them. These were magnificent ones,

and she was by no means indifferent to them. Her cheek faintly flushed, her eyes vaguely glowed, and though her beauty, in the literal sense, was questionable, all that Benvolio said of her had never seemed more true. He said more in the same strain, and she listened without interrupting him. But at last she suddenly became impatient; it seemed to her that this was after all a tolerably inexpensive sort of tribute. But she did not betray her impatience with any petulance; she simply shook her finger a moment, to enjoin silence, and then she said, in a voice of extreme gentleness—"You have too much imagination!" He answered that to do her perfect justice, he had too little. To this she replied that it was not of her any longer he was talking; he had left her far behind. He was spinning fancies about some highly subtilized figment of his brain. The best answer to this, it seemed to Benvolio, was to seize her hand and kiss it. I don't know what the Countess thought of this form of argument; I incline to think it both pleased and vexed her; it was at once too much and too little. She snatched her hand away and went rapidly into the house. Although Benvolio immediately followed her, he was unable to overtake her; she had retired into impenetrable seclusion. A short time afterward she left town and went for the summer to an estate which she possessed in a distant part of the country.

III

Benvolio was extremely fond of the country, but he remained in town after all his friends had departed. Many of them made him say he would come and see them. He promised, or half promised, but when he reflected that in almost every case he would find a house full of fellow-guests, to whose pursuits he would have to conform, and that if he rambled away with a valued duodecimo in his pocket to spend the morning alone in the woods, he would be denounced as a marplot and a selfish brute, he felt no great desire to pack his bag. He had, as we know, his moods of expansion and of contraction; he had been tolerably expansive for many months past, and now the tide of contraction had set in. And then I suspect the foolish fellow had no money to travel withal. He had lately put all his available funds into the purchase of a picture—an estimable work of the Venetian school, suddenly thrown into the market. It was offered for a moderate sum, and

Benvolio, who was one of the first to see it, secured it and hung it triumphantly in his room. It had all the classic Venetian glow, and he used to lie on his divan by the hour, gazing at it. It had, indeed, a peculiar property, of which I have known no other example. Most pictures that are remarkable for their color (especially if they have been painted a couple of centuries) need a flood of sunshine on the canvas to bring it out. But this one seemed to have a hidden radiance of its own, which showed brightest when the room was half darkened. When Benvolio wished especially to enjoy his treasure he dropped his Venetian blinds, and the picture glowed forth into the cool dusk with enchanting effect. It represented, in a fantastic way, the story of Perseus and Andromeda—the beautiful naked maiden chained to a rock, on which, with picturesque incongruity, a wild fig-tree was growing; the green Adriatic tumbling at her feet, and a splendid brown-limbed youth in a curious helmet hovering near her on a winged horse. The journey his fancy made as he lay and looked at his picture Benvolio preferred to any journey he might make by the public conveyances.

But he resorted for entertainment, as he had often done before, to the windows overlooking the old garden behind his house. As the summer deepened of course the charm of the garden increased. It

grew more tangled and bosky and mossy, and sent forth sweeter and heavier odors into the neighboring air. It was a perfect solitude: Benvolio had never seen a visitor there. One day, therefore, at this time, it puzzled him most agreeably to perceive a young girl sitting under one of the trees. She sat there a long time, and though she was at a distance, he managed, by looking long enough, to make out that she was pretty. She was dressed in black, and when she left her place her step had a kind of nun-like gentleness and demureness. Although she was alone, she seemed shy and half-startled. She wandered away and disappeared from sight, save that here and there he saw her white parasol gleaming in the gaps of the foliage. Then she came back to her seat under the great tree, and remained there for some time, arranging in her lap certain flowers that she had gathered. Then she rose again and vanished, and Benvolio waited in vain for her return. She had evidently gone into the house. The next day he saw her again, and the next, and the next. On these occasions she had a book in her hand, and she sat in her former place a long time, and read it with an air of great attention. Now and then she raised her head and glanced toward the house as if to keep something in sight which divided her care; and once or twice she laid down her book and tripped away to her hidden duties with a

lighter step than she had shown the first day. Benvolio had a fancy that she had an invalid parent, or a relation of some kind, who was unable to walk, and had been moved into a window overlooking the garden. She always took up her book again when she came back, and bent her pretty head over it with charming earnestness. Benvolio had already discovered that her head was pretty. He fancied it resembled a certain exquisite little head on a Greek silver coin which lay, with several others, in an agate cup on his table. You see he had also already taken to fancying, and I offer this as the excuse for his staring at his modest neighbor by the hour in this inordinately idle fashion. But he was not really idle, because he was—I can't say falling in love with her: he knew her too little for that, and besides, he was in love with the Countess—but because he was at any rate cudgelling his brains about her. Who was she? what was she? why had he never seen her before? The house in which she apparently lived was on another street from Benvolio's own, but he went out of his way on purpose to look at it. It was an ancient, gray, sad-faced structure, with grated windows on the ground floor; it looked like a convent or a prison. Over a wall, beside it, there tumbled into the street some stray tendrils of a wild vine from Benvolio's garden. Suddenly Benvolio began to fancy that the book the young girl in the

garden was reading was none other than a volume of his own, put forth some six months before. His volume had a white cover and so had this; white covers are rather rare, and there was nothing impossible either in this young lady's reading his book or in her finding it interesting. Very many other women had done the same. Benvolio's neighbor had a pencil in her pocket, which she every now and then drew forth, to make with it a little mark on her page. This quiet gesture gave the young man an exquisite pleasure.

I am ashamed to say how much time he spent, for a week, at his window. Every day the young girl came into the garden. At last there befell a rainy day—a long, warm summer's rain—and she stayed within doors. He missed her quite acutely, and wondered, half-smiling, half-frowning, at her absence making such a difference with him. He actually depended upon her. He didn't know her name; he knew neither the color of her eyes nor the shade of her hair, nor the sound of her voice; it was very likely that if he were to meet her face to face elsewhere, he would not recognize her. But she interested him; he liked her; he found her little indefinite, black-dressed figure sympathetic. He used to find the Countess sympathetic, and certainly the Countess was as unlike this quiet garden nymph as she could very well be and be yet a charming woman. Ben-

volio's sympathies, as we know, were broad. After the rain the young girl came out again, and now she had another book, having apparently finished Benvolio's. He was gratified to observe that she bestowed upon this one a much more wandering attention. Sometimes she let it drop listlessly at her side, and seemed to lose herself in maidenly reverie. Was she thinking how much more beautiful Benvolio's verses were than others of the day? Was she perhaps repeating them to herself? It charmed Benvolio to suppose she might be; for he was not spoiled in this respect. The Countess knew none of his poetry by heart; she was nothing of a reader. She had his book on her table, but he once noticed that half the leaves were uncut.

After a couple of days of sunshine the rain came back again, to our hero's infinite annoyance, and this time it lasted several days. The garden lay dripping and desolate; its charm had quite departed. These days passed gloomily for Benvolio; he decided that rainy weather, in summer, in town, was intolerable. He began to think of the Countess again. He was sure that over her broad lands the summer sun was shining. He saw them, in envious fancy, studded with joyous Watteau groups, feasting and making music under the shade of ancestral beeches. What a charming life! he thought—what brilliant, enchanted, memorable days! He had said the very

reverse of all this, as you remember, three weeks before. I don't know that he had ever formulated the idea that men of imagination are not bound to be consistent, but he certainly conformed to its spirit. We are not, however, by any means at the end of his inconsistencies. He immediately wrote a letter to the Countess asking her if he might pay her a visit.

Shortly after he had sent his letter the weather mended, and he went out to take a walk. The sun was near setting; the streets were all ruddy and golden with its light, and the scattered rain-clouds, broken into a thousand little particles, were flecking the sky like a shower of opals and amethysts. Benvolio stopped, as he sauntered along, to gossip a while with his friend the bookseller. The bookseller was a foreigner and a man of taste; his shop was on the corner of the great square. When Benvolio went in he was serving a lady, and the lady was dressed in black. Benvolio just now found it natural to notice a lady who was dressed in black, and the fact that this lady's face was averted made observation at once more easy and more fruitless. But at last her errand was finished; she had been ordering several books, and the bookseller was writing down their names. Then she turned round, and Benvolio saw her face. He stood staring at her most inconsiderately, for he felt an immediate cer-

tainty that she was the bookish damsel of the garden. She gave a glance round the shop, at the books on the walls, at the prints and busts, the apparatus of learning, in various forms, that it contained, and then, with the gentle, half-furtive step which Benvolio now knew so well, she took her departure. Benvolio seized the startled bookseller by the two hands and besieged him with questions. The bookseller, however, was able to answer but few of them. The young girl had been in his shop but once before, and had simply left an address, without any name. It was the address of which Benvolio had assured himself. The books she had ordered were all learned works—disquisitions on philosophy, on history, on the natural sciences. She seemed an expert in such matters. For some of the volumes that she had just bespoken the bookseller was to send to foreign countries; the others were to be despatched that evening to the address which the young girl had left. As Benvolio stood there the bibliophilist gathered these latter together, and while he was so engaged he uttered a little cry of distress: one of the volumes of a set was missing. The book was a rare one, and it would be hard to repair the loss. Benvolio on the instant had an inspiration; he demanded leave of his friend to act as messenger: he would carry the books, as if he came from the shop, and he would explain the absence of the lost volume, and

the bookseller's views about replacing it, far better than one of the hirelings. He asked leave, I say, but he did not wait till it was given: he snatched up the pile of books and strode triumphantly away!

IV

As there was no name on the parcel, Benvolio, on reaching the old gray house, over the wall of whose court an adventurous creeper stretched its long arm into the street, found himself wondering in what terms he should ask to have speech of the person for whom the books were intended. At any hazard he was determined not to retreat until he had caught a glimpse of the interior and its inhabitants; for this was the same man, you must remember, who had scaled the moonlit wall of the Countess's garden. An old serving woman in a quaint cap answered his summons, and stood blinking out at the fading daylight from a little wrinkled white face, as if she had never been compelled to take so direct a look at it before. He informed her that he had come from the bookseller's, and that he had been charged with a personal message for the venerable gentleman who had bespoken the parcel. Might he crave license to speak with him? This obsequious phrase was an im-

provisation of the moment: of course it was hit or miss. But Benvolio had an indefinable conviction that it was rightly aimed; the only thing that surprised him was the quiet complaisance of the old woman.

"If it's on a bookish errand you come, sir," she said with a little wheezy sigh, "I suppose I only do my duty in admitting you!"

She led him into the house, through various dusky chambers, and at last ushered him into an apartment of which the side opposite to the door was occupied by a broad, low casement. Through its small old panes there came a green dim light—the light of the low western sun shining through the wet trees of the famous garden. Everything else was ancient and brown; the walls were covered with tiers upon tiers of books. Near the window, in the still twilight, sat two persons, one of whom rose as Benvolio came in. This was the young girl of the garden—the young girl of an hour since at the bookseller's. The other was an old man who turned his head, but otherwise sat quite still.

Both his movements and his stillness immediately announced to Benvolio's fine sense that he was blind. In his quality of poet Benvolio was inventive; a brain that is constantly cudgelled for rhymes is tolerably alert. In a few moments, therefore, he had given a vigorous push to the wheel of fortune. Va-

rious things had happened. He had made a soft, respectful speech, he hardly knew about what; and the old man had told him he had a delectable voice —a voice that seemed to belong rather to a person of education than to a tradesman's porter. Benvolio confessed to having picked up an education, and the old man had thereupon bidden the young girl offer him a seat. Benvolio chose his seat where he could see her, as she sat at the low-browed casement. The bookseller on the square thought it likely Benvolio would come back that evening and give him an account of his errand, and before he closed his shop he looked up and down the street, to see whether the young man was approaching. Benvolio came, but the shop was closed. He didn't notice it: he walked three times round the great Place without noticing it. He was thinking of something else. He had sat all the evening with the blind old scholar and his daughter, and he was thinking intently, ardently of them. When I say of them, of course I mean of the daughter.

A few days afterward he got a note from the Countess saying it would give her pleasure to receive his visit. He immediately wrote to her that, with a thousand regrets, he found himself urgently occupied in town and must beg leave to defer his departure for a day or two. The regrets were perfectly sincere, but the plea was none the less valid.

Benvolio had become deeply interested in his tranquil neighbors, and, for the moment, a certain way the young girl had of looking at him—fixing her eyes, first, with a little vague, half-absent smile, on an imaginary point above his head, and then slowly dropping them till they met his own—was quite sufficient to make him happy. He had called once more on her father, and once more, and yet once more, and he had a vivid prevision that he would often call again. He had been in the garden and found its mild mouldiness even more delightful on a nearer view. He had pulled off his very ill-fitting mask, and let his neighbors know that his trade was not to carry parcels, but to scribble verses. The old man had never heard of his verses; he read nothing that had been published later than the sixth century; and nowadays he could read only with his daughter's eyes. Benvolio had seen the little white volume on the table, and assured himself it was his own; and he noted the fact that in spite of its well-thumbed air, the young girl had never given her father a hint of its contents. I said just now that several things had happened in the first half hour of Benvolio's first visit. One of them was that this modest maiden fell most positively in love with him. What happened when she learned that he was the author of the little white volume I hardly know how to express; her innocent passion, I suppose, passed from

the positive to the superlative degree. Benvolio possessed an old quarto volume, bound in Russia leather, about which there clung an agreeable pungent odor. In this old quarto he kept a sort of diary —if that can be called a diary in which a whole year had sometimes been allowed to pass without an entry. On the other hand, there were some interminable records of a single day. Turning it over you would have chanced, not infrequently, upon the name of the Countess; and at this time you would have observed on every page some mention of "the Professor" and of a certain person named Scholastica. Scholastica, we immediately guess, was the Professor's daughter. Very likely this was not her own name, but it was the name by which Benvolio preferred to know her, and we needn't be more exact than he. By this time, of course, he knew a great deal about her, and about her venerable sire. The Professor, before the loss of his eyesight and his health, had been one of the stateliest pillars of the University. He was now an old man; he had married late in life. When his infirmities came upon him he gave up his chair and his classes and buried himself in his library. He made his daughter his reader and his secretary, and his prodigious memory assisted her clear young voice and her steady-moving pen. He was held in great honor in the scholastic world; learned men came from afar to con-

sult the blind sage, and to appeal to his wisdom as to the ultimate law. The University settled a pension upon him, and he dwelt in a dusky corner, among the academic shades. The pension was small, but the old scholar and the young girl lived with conventual simplicity. It so happened, however, that he had a brother, or rather a half brother, who was not a bookish man, save as regarded his ledger and day-book. This personage had made money in trade, and had retired, wifeless and childless, into the old gray house attached to Benvolio's garden. He had the reputation of a skinflint, a curmudgeon, a bloodless old miser who spent his days in shuffling about his mouldy old house, making his pockets jingle, and his nights in lifting his money-bags out of trapdoors, and counting over his hoard. He was nothing but a chilling shadow, an evil name, a pretext for a curse: no one had ever seen him, much less crossed his threshold. But it seemed that he had a soft spot in his heart. He wrote one day to his brother, whom he had not seen for years, that the rumor had come to him that he was blind, infirm, and poor; that he himself had a large house with a garden behind it, and that if the Professor was not too proud, he was welcome to come and lodge there.

The Professor had come in this way a few weeks before, and though it would seem that to a sightless old ascetic all lodgings might be the same, he took

a great satisfaction in this one. His daughter found it a paradise, compared with their two narrow chambers under the old gable of the University, where, amid the constant coming and going of students, a young girl was compelled to lead a cloistered life.

Benvolio had assigned as his motive for intrusion, when he had been obliged to confess to his real character, an irresistible desire to ask the old man's opinion on certain knotty points of philosophy. This was a pardonable fiction, for the event, at any rate, justified it. Benvolio, when he was fairly launched in a philosophical discussion, forgot that there was anything in the world but metaphysics; he revelled in transcendent abstractions, and became unconscious of all concrete things—even of that most brilliant of concrete things, the Countess. He longed to embark on a voyage of discovery on the great sea of pure reason. He knew that from such voyages the deep-browed adventurer rarely returns; but if he finds an El Dorado of thought, why should he regret the dusky world of fact? Benvolio had much high discourse with the Professor, who was a devout Neo-Platonist, and whose venerable wit had spun to subtler tenuity the ethereal speculations of the Alexandrian school. Benvolio at this season vowed that study and science were the only game in life worth the candle, and wondered how he could ever for an instant have thought otherwise. He

turned off a little poem in the style of Milton's "Penseroso," which, if it had not quite the merit of that famous effusion, was at least the young man's own happiest performance. When Benvolio liked a thing he liked it as a whole—it appealed to all his senses. He relished its accidents, its accessories, its material envelope. In the satisfaction he took in his visits to the Professor it would have been hard to say where the charm of philosophy began or ended. If it began with a glimpse of the old man's mild, sightless blue eyes, sitting fixed beneath his shaggy white brows like patches of pale winter sky under a high-piled cloud, it hardly ended before it reached the little black bow on Scholastica's slipper; and certainly it had taken a comprehensive sweep in the interval. There was nothing in his friends that the appreciative fellow did not feel an immense kindness for. Their seclusion, their stillness, their supersimple notions of the world and the world's ways, the faint, musty perfume of the University which hovered about them, their brown old apartment, impenetrable to the rumors of the town—all these things were part of the charm. Then the essence of it perhaps was that in this silent, simple life the intellectual key, if you touched it, was so finely resonant. In the way of thought there was nothing into which his friends were not initiated—nothing they could not understand. The mellow light of their

low-browed room, streaked with the moted rays that slanted past the dusky bookshelves, was the atmosphere of culture. All this made them, humble folk as they were, not so simple as they at first appeared. They, too, in their own fashion, knew the world; they were not people to be patronized; to visit them was not a condescension but a privilege.

In the Professor this was not surprising. He had passed fifty years in arduous study, and it was proper to his character and his office that he should be erudite, impressive, and venerable. But sweet Scholastica seemed to Benvolio at first almost grotesquely wise. She was an anomaly, a prodigy, a charming monstrosity. Charming, at any rate, she was, and as pretty, I must lose no more time in saying, as had seemed likely to Benvolio at his window. And yet, even on a nearer view, her prettiness shone forth slowly and half-dimly. It was as if it had been covered with a series of film-like veils, which had to be successively drawn aside. And then it was such a homely, shrinking, subtle prettiness, that Benvolio, in the private record I have mentioned, never thought of calling it by the arrogant name of beauty. He called it by no name at all; he contented himself with enjoying it—with looking into the young girl's mild gray eyes and saying things, on purpose, that caused her candid smile to deepen until (like the broadening ripple of a lake) it reached a

certain dimple in her left cheek. This was its maximum; no smile could do more, and Benvolio desired nothing better. Yet I cannot say he was in love with the young girl; he only liked her. But he liked her, no doubt, as a man likes a thing but once in his life. As he knew her better the oddity of her learning quite faded away; it seemed delightfully natural, and he only wondered why there were not more women of the same pattern. Scholastica had imbibed the wine of science instead of her mother's milk. Her mother had died in her infancy, leaving her cradled in an old folio, three-quarters opened, like a wide V. Her father had been her nurse, her playmate, her teacher, her life-long companion, her only friend. He taught her the Greek alphabet before she knew her own, and fed her with crumbs from his own scholastic revels. She had taken submissively what was given her, and, without knowing it, she grew up a learned maiden.

Benvolio perceived that she was not in the least a woman of genius. The passion for knowledge, of its own motion, would never have carried her far. But she had a clear, tranquil, natural mind, which gave back an exact, definite image of everything that was presented to it; the sort of intelligence, Benvolio said, which had been, as a minimum, every one's portion in the golden age, and would be again the golden mean in the millennium. And then she

was so teachable, so diligent, so indefatigable. Slender and meagre as she was, and rather pale, too, with being much within doors, she was never tired, she never had a headache, she never closed her book or laid down a pen with a sigh. For helping a man, Benvolio thought it was an exquisite organism. What a work he might do on summer mornings and winter nights with that brightly demure little creature at his side, transcribing, recollecting, sympathizing! He wondered how much she cared for these things herself; whether a woman could care for them without being dry and harsh. It was in a great measure for information on this point that he used to question her eyes with the frequency that I have mentioned. But they never gave him a perfectly direct answer, and this was why he came and came again. They seemed to him to say, "If you could lead a student's life for my sake, I could be a life-long household scribe for yours." Was it divine philosophy that made Scholastica charming, or was it she that made philosophy divine? I cannot relate everything that came to pass between these young people, and I must leave a great deal to your imagination. The summer waned, and when the autumnal shadow began to gnaw the bright edge of the days, the quiet couple in the old gray house had expanded to a talkative trio. For Benvolio the days had passed very fast; the trio had talked of so many

things. He had spent many an hour in the garden with the young girl, strolling in the weedy paths, or resting on a moss-grown bench. She was a delightful listener, because while she was perfectly deferential, she was also perfectly attentive. Benvolio had had women fix very beautiful eyes upon him, and watch with an air of ecstasy the movement of his lips, and yet had found them three minutes afterward quite incapable of saying what he was talking about. Scholastica followed him and, without effort or exultation, understood him.

V

You will say that my description of Benvolio has done him injustice, and that, far from being the sentimental weathercock I have depicted, he is proving himself a model of constancy. But mark the sequel. It was at this moment, precisely, that, one morning, having gone to bed the night before singing pæans to divine philosophy, he woke up with a headache, and in the worst of humors with it. He remembered Scholastica telling him that she never had headaches, and the memory quite annoyed him. He was in the mood for declaring her a neat little mechanical toy, wound up to turn pages and write a pretty hand, but with neither a head nor a heart that was capable of human ailments. He fell asleep again, and in one of those brief but vivid dreams that sometimes occur in the morning hours, he had a brilliant vision of the Countess. *She* was human beyond a doubt, and duly familiar with headaches and heartaches. He felt an irresistible desire to see

her and to tell her that he adored her. This satisfaction was not unattainable, and before the day was over he was well on his way toward enjoying it. He found the Countess holding her usual court, and making a merry world of it. He had meant to stay with her a week; he stayed two months—the most entertaining months of his life. I cannot pretend, of course, to enumerate the diversions of this fortunate circle, nor to say just how Benvolio spent every hour of his time. But if the summer had passed quickly with him, the autumn moved with a tread as light. He thought once in a while of Scholastica and her father—once in a while, I say, when present occupations suffered his thoughts to wander. This was not often, for the Countess had always, as the phrase is, a dozen irons on the fire. You see the negative, with Benvolio, always implied as distinct a positive, and his excuse for being inconstant on one side was that he was at that time very constant on another. He developed at this period a talent as yet untried and unsuspected: he proved himself capable of writing brilliant dramatic poetry. The long autumn evenings, in a great country house, offered the ideal setting for the much-abused pastime known as private theatricals. The Countess had a theatre, and abundant material for a troupe of amateur players; all that was lacking was a play exactly adapted to her resources. She pro-

posed to Benvolio to write one; the idea took his fancy; he shut himself up in the library, and in a week produced a masterpiece. He had found the subject one day when he was pulling over the Countess's books in an old MS. chronicle written by the chaplain of one of her late husband's ancestors. It was the germ of an admirable drama, and Benvolio enjoyed vastly the work of bringing it to maturity. All his genius, all his imagination went into it. This was their proper mission, he cried to himself—the study of warm human passions, the painting of rich dramatic pictures, not the bald excogitation of cold metaphysical formulas. His play was acted with brilliant success, the Countess herself representing the heroine. Benvolio had never seen her act, and had no idea she possessed the talent; but she was inimitable, she was a natural artist. What gives charm to life, Benvolio hereupon said to himself, is the element of the unexpected, the unforeseen; and this one finds only in women of the Countess's type. And I should do wrong to imply that he here made an invidious comparison, because he did not even think of Scholastica. His play was repeated several times, and people were invited to see it from all the country round. There was a great bivouac of servants in the castle court; in the cold November nights a bonfire was lighted to keep the servants warm. It was a great triumph for Ben-

volio, and he frankly enjoyed it. He knew he enjoyed it, and how great a triumph it was, and he felt every disposition to drain the cup to the last drop. He relished his own elation, and found himself excellent company. He began immediately another drama—a comedy this time—and he was greatly interested to observe that when his work was fairly on the stocks he found himself regarding all the people about him as types and available figures. Everything paid tribute to his work; everything presented itself as possible material. Life, really, on these terms was becoming very interesting, and for several nights the laurels of Molière kept Benvolio awake.

Delightful as this was, however, it could not last forever. At the beginning of the winter the Countess returned to town, and Benvolio came back with her, his unfinished comedy in his pocket. During much of the journey he was silent and abstracted, and the Countess supposed he was thinking of how he should make the most of that capital situation in his third act. The Countess's perspicuity was just sufficient to carry her so far—to lead her, in other words, into plausible wrong conjectures. Benvolio was really wondering what in the name of mystery had suddenly become of his inspiration, and why his comedy had turned stale on his hands as the cracking of the post-boy's whip. He looked out at the scrubby

fields, the rusty woods, the sullen sky, and asked himself whether *that* was the world to which it had been but yesterday his high ambition to hold up the mirror. The Countess's *dame de compagnie* sat opposite to him in the carriage. Yesterday he thought her, with her pale, discreet face, and her eager movements that pretended to be indifferent, a finished specimen of an entertaining genus. To-day he could only say that if there was a whole genus, it was a thousand pities, for the poor lady struck him as miserably false and servile. The real seemed hideous; he felt homesick for his dear familiar rooms between the garden and the square, and he longed to get into them and bolt his door and bury himself in his old arm-chair and cultivate idealism for evermore. The first thing he actually did on getting into them was to go to the window and look out into the garden. It had greatly changed in his absence, and the old maimed statues, which all summer had been comfortably muffled in verdure, were now, by an odd contradiction of propriety, standing white and naked in the cold. I don't exactly know how soon it was that Benvolio went back to see his neighbors. It was after no great interval, and yet it was not immediately. He had a bad conscience, and he was wondering what he should say to them. It seemed to him now (though he had not thought of it sooner) that they might accuse him of neglecting them. He

had cultivated their friendship, he had professed the highest esteem for them, and then he had turned his back on them without farewell, and without a word of explanation. He had not written to them; in truth, during his sojourn with the Countess, it would not have been hard for him to persuade himself that they were people he had only dreamed about, or read about, at most, in some old volume of memoirs. People of their value, he could now imagine them saying, were not to be taken up and dropped in that summary fashion; and if friendship was not to be friendship as they themselves understood it, it was better that he should forget them at once, for all time. It is perhaps too much to affirm that he could imagine them saying all this; they were too mild and civil, too unused to acting in self-defence. But they might easily receive him in a way that would irresistibly imply it, for a man of any delicacy. He felt profaned, dishonored, almost contaminated; so that perhaps when he did at last return to his friends, it was because that was the simplest way to be purified. How did they receive him? I told you a good way back that Scholastica was in love with him, and you may arrange the scene in your fancy in any manner that best accords with this circumstance. Her forgiveness, of course, when once that chord was touched, was proportionate to her resentment. But Benvolio took refuge both

from his own compunctions and from the young girl's reproaches, in whatever form these were conveyed, in making a full confession of what he was pleased to call his frivolity. As he walked through the naked garden with Scholastica, kicking the wrinkled leaves, he told her the whole story of his sojourn with the Countess. The young girl listened with bright intentness, as she would have listened to some thrilling chapter of romance; but she neither sighed, nor looked wistful, nor seemed to envy the Countess, or to repine at her own dull fashion of life. It was all too remote for comparison; it was not, for Scholistica, among the things that might have been. Benvolio talked to her about the Countess, without reserve. If she liked it, he found on his side that it eased his mind; and as he said nothing that the Countess would not have been flattered by, there was no harm done. Although, however, Benvolio uttered nothing but praise of this distinguished lady, he was very frank in saying that she and her way of life always left him at the end in a worse humor than when they found him. They were very well in their way, he said, but their way was not his way, or could not be in the long run; for him, he was convinced, the only happiness was in seclusion, meditation, concentration. Scholastica answered that it gave her extreme pleasure to hear this, for it was her father's belief that Benvolio

had a great aptitude for philosophical research, and that it was a sacred duty with him to devote his days and his nights to it.

"And what is your own belief?" Benvolio asked, remembering that the young girl knew several of his poems by heart.

Her answer was very simple: "I believe you're a poet."

"And a poet oughtn't to run the risk of turning pedant?"

"No," she answered; "a poet ought to run all risks—even that one which for a poet, perhaps, is the most cruel. But he ought to evade them all!"

Benvolio took great satisfaction in hearing that the Professor deemed that he had in him the making of a philosopher, and it gave an impetus to the zeal with which he returned to work.

VI

Of course even the most zealous student cannot work always, and often, after a very philosophical day, Benvolio spent with the Countess a very sentimental morning. It is my duty as a veracious historian not to conceal the fact that he discoursed to the Countess about Scholastica. He gave such a puzzling description of her that the Countess declared that she must be a delightfully quaint creature, and that it would be vastly amusing to know her. She hardly supposed Benvolio was in love with this little book-worm in petticoats, but to make sure —if that might be called making sure—she deliberately asked him. He said No; he hardly saw how he could be, since he was in love with the Countess herself! For a while this answer satisfied her, but as the winter went by she began to wonder whether there was not such a thing as a man being in love with two women at once. During many months that followed Benvolio led a kind of double life.

Sometimes it charmed him and gave him an inspiring sense of personal power. He haunted the domicile of his gentle neighbors, and drank deep of philosophy, history, and all the garnered wisdom of the ages; and he made appearances as frequent in the Countess's drawing-room, where he played his part with magnificent zest and ardor. It was a life of alternation, and variation, and contrast, and it really demanded a vigorous and elastic temperament. Sometimes his own seemed to him quite inadequate to the occasion—he felt fevered, bewildered, exhausted. But when it came to the point, it was impossible to give up either his worldly habits or his studious aspirations. Benvolio raged inwardly at the cruel limitations of the human mind, and declared it was a great outrage that a man should not be personally able to do everything he could imagine doing. I hardly know how she contrived it, but the Countess was at this time a more engaging woman than she had ever been. Her beauty acquired an ampler and richer cast, and she had a manner of looking at you, as she slowly turned away, which had lighted a hopeless flame in many a youthful breast. Benvolio one day felt in the mood for finishing his comedy, and the Countess and her friends acted it. Its success was no less brilliant than that of its predecessor, and the manager of the theatre immediately demanded the privi-

lege of producing it. You will hardly believe me, however, when I tell you that on the night that his comedy was introduced to the public its eccentric author sat discussing the absolute and the relative with the Professor and his daughter. Benvolio had all winter been observing that Scholastica never looked so pretty as when she sat, of a winter's night, plying a quiet needle in the mellow circle of a certain antique brass lamp. On the night in question he happened to fall a-thinking of this picture, and he tramped out across the snow for the express purpose of looking at it. It was sweeter even than his memory promised, and it drew every thought of his theatrical honors from his head. Scholastica gave him some tea, and her tea, for mysterious reasons, was delicious; better, strange to say, than that of the Countess, who, however, it must be added, recovered her ground in coffee. The Professor's miserly brother owned a ship which made voyages to China, and brought him goodly chests of the incomparable plant. He sold the cargo for great sums, but he kept a chest for himself. It was always the best one, and he had at this time carefully measured a part of his annual quantum into a piece of flossy tissue paper, made it into a little parcel, and presented it to Scholastica. This is the secret history of Benvolio's fragrant cups. While he was drinking them on the night I speak of—I am

ashamed to say how many he drank—his name, at the theatre, was being tossed across the footlights to a brilliant, clamorous multitude, who hailed him as the redeemer of the national stage. But I am not sure that he even told his friends that his play was being acted. Indeed, this was hardly possible, for I meant to say just now that he had forgotten it.

It is very certain, however, that he enjoyed the criticisms the next day in the newspapers. Radiant and jubilant, he went to see the Countess. He found her looking terribly dark. She had been at the theatre, prepared to revel in his triumph—to place on his head with her own hand, as it were, the laurel awarded by the public; and his absence had seemed to her a sort of personal slight. Yet his triumph had nevertheless given her an exceeding pleasure, for it had been the seal of her secret hopes of him. Decidedly he was to be a great man, and this was not the moment for letting him go! At the same time there was something impressive in this extraordinary lapse in his eagerness—in his finding it so easy to forget his honors. It was only an intellectual Crœsus, the Countess said to herself, who could afford to keep so loose an account. But she insisted on knowing where he had been, and he told her he had been discussing philosophy and tea with the Professor.

"And was not the daughter there?" the Countess demanded.

"Most sensibly!" he cried. And then he added in a moment—"I don't know whether I ever told you, but she's almost as pretty as you."

The Countess resented the compliment to Scholastica much more than she enjoyed the compliment to herself. She felt an extreme curiosity to see this inky-fingered little nobody, who was spoken of thus freely in the same breath with herself; and as she seldom failed, sooner or later, to compass her desires, she succeeded at last in catching a glimpse of her innocent rival. To do so she was obliged to set a great deal of machinery in motion. She made Benvolio give a lunch, in his rooms, to some ladies who professed a desire to see his works of art, and of whom she constituted herself the chaperon. She took care that he threw open the room that looked into the garden, and here, at the window, she spent much of her time. There was but a chance that Scholastica would come forth into the garden, but it was a chance worth staking something upon. The Countess gave to it time and temper, and she was finally rewarded. Scholastica came out. The poor girl strolled about for half an hour, in profound unconsciousness that the Countess's fine eyes were devouring her. The impression she made was singular. The Countess found her both pretty and ugly:

she did not admire her herself, but she understood that Benvolio might. For herself personally she detested her, and when Scholastica went in and she turned away from the window, her first movement was to pass before a mirror, which showed her something that, impartially considered, seemed to her a thousand times more beautiful. The Countess made no comments, and took good care Benvolio did not suspect the trick she had played him. There was something more she promised herself to do, and she impatiently awaited her opportunity.

In the middle of the winter she announced to him that she was going to spend ten days in the country: she had received the most attractive accounts of the state of things on her estate. There had been great snow-falls, and the sleighing was magnificent; the lakes and streams were solidly frozen, there was an unclouded moon, and the resident gentry were skating, half the night, by torch-light. The Countess was passionately fond both of sleighing and skating, and she found this picture irresistible. And then she was charitable, and observed that it would be a kindness to the poor resident gentry, whose usual pleasures were of a frugal sort, to throw open her house and give a ball or two, with the village fiddlers. Perhaps even they might organize a bear-hunt—an entertainment at which, if properly conducted, a lady might be present as spectator. The

Countess told Benvolio all this one day as he sat with her in her boudoir, in the fire-light, during the hour that precedes dinner. She had said more than once that he must decamp—that she must go and dress for dinner; but neither of them had moved. She did not invite him to go with her to the country; she only watched him as he sat gazing with a frown at the firelight—the crackling light of the great logs which had been cut in the Countess's bear-haunted forests. At last she rose impatiently, and fairly turned him out. After he had gone she stood for a moment looking at the fire with the tip of her foot on the fender. She had not to wait long; he came back within the minute—came back and begged her leave to go with her to the country—to skate with her in the crystal moonlight and dance with her to the sound of the village fiddles. It hardly matters in what terms his petition was granted: the notable point is that he made it. He was her only companion, and when they were established in the castle the hospitality extended to the resident gentry was less abundant than had been promised. Benvolio, however, did not complain of the absence of it, because, for the week or so, he was passionately in love with his hostess. They took long sleigh-rides and drank deep of the poetry of winter. The blue shadows on the snow, the cold amber lights in the west, the leafless twigs against the snow-charged sky, all gave

them extraordinary pleasure. The nights were even better, when the great silver stars, before the moon-rise, glittered on the polished ice, and the young Countess and her lover, firmly joining hands, launched themselves into motion and into the darkness and went skimming for miles with their winged steps. On their return, before the great chimney-place in the old library, they lingered a while and drank little cups of wine heated with spices. It was perhaps here, cup in hand—this point is uncertain—that Benvolio broke through the last bond of his reserve, and told the Countess that he loved her, in a manner that quite satisfied her. To be his in all solemnity, his only and his forever—this he explicitly, passionately, imperiously demanded of her. After this she gave her ball to her country neighbors, and Benvolio danced, to a boisterous, swinging measure, with a dozen ruddy beauties dressed in the fashions of the year before last. The Countess danced with the lusty male counterparts of these damsels, but she found plenty of chances to watch Benvolio. Toward the end of the evening she saw him looking grave and bored, with very much such a frown in his forehead as when he had sat staring at the fire that last day in her boudoir. She said to herself for the hundredth time that he was the oddest of mortals.

On their return to the city she had frequent oc-

casion to say it again. He looked at moments as if he had repented of his bargain—as if it did not at all suit him that his being the Countess's only lover should involve her being his only mistress. She deemed now that she had acquired the right to make him give an account of his time, and he did not conceal the fact that the first thing he had done after his return was to go to see his eccentric neighbors. She treated him hereupon to a passionate outburst of jealousy; called Scholastica a dozen harsh names —a dingy little Quakeress, a little underhand, hypocritical Puritan; demanded he should promise never to speak to her again, and summoned him to make a choice once for all. Would he belong to her, or to that odious little blue-stocking? It must be one thing or the other; he must take her or leave her; it was impossible she should have a lover who could be so little depended upon. The Countess did not say this made her unhappy, but she repeated a dozen times that it made her ridiculous. Benvolio turned very pale; she had never seen him so before; a great struggle was evidently taking place within him. A terrible scene was the consequence. He broke out into reproaches and imprecations; he accused the Countess of being his bad angel, of making him neglect his best faculties, mutilate his genius, squander his life; and yet he confessed that he was committed to her; that she fascinated him beyond resistance,

and that, at any sacrifice, he must still be her slave. This confession gave the Countess uncommon satisfaction, and made up in a measure for the unflattering remarks that accompanied it. She on her side confessed—what she had always been too proud to acknowledge hitherto—that she cared vastly for him, and that she had waited for long months for him to say something of this kind. They parted on terms which it is hard to define—full of mutual resentment and devotion, at once adoring and hating each other. All this was deep and stirring emotion, and Benvolio, as an artist, always in one way or another found his profit in emotion, even when it lacerated or suffocated him. There was, moreover, a sort of elation in having burnt his ship behind him, and he vowed to seek his fortune, in the tumult of the life and action. He did no work; his power of work, for the time at least, was paralyzed. Sometimes this frightened him; it seemed as if his genius were dead, his career cut short; at other moments his faith soared supreme; he heard, in broken murmurs, the voice of the muse, and said to himself that he was only resting, waiting, storing up knowledge. Before long he felt tolerably tranquil again; ideas began to come to him, and the world to seem entertaining. He demanded of the Countess that, without further delay, their union should be solemnized. But the Countess, at that interview I have just re-

lated, had in spite of her high spirit received a great fright. Benvolio, stalking up and down with clinched hands and angry eyes, had seemed to her a terrible man to marry; and though she was conscious of a strong will of her own, as well as of robust nerves, she had shuddered at the thought that such scenes might recur. She had hitherto seen little but the mild and caressing, or at most the joyous and fantastic side of her friend's disposition; but it now appeared that there was another side to be taken into account, and that if Benvolio had talked of sacrifices, these were not all to be made by him. They say the world likes its master—that a horse of high spirit likes being well ridden. This may be true in the long run; but the Countess, who was essentially a woman of the world, was not yet prepared to surrender her own luxurious liberty in tribute. She admired Benvolio the more now that she was afraid of him, but at the same time she liked him a trifle less. She answered that marriage was a very serious matter; that they had lately had a taste of each other's tempers; that they had better wait a while longer; that she had made up her mind to travel for a year, and that she strongly recommended him to come with her, for travelling was notoriously an excellent test of friendship.

VII

She went to Italy, and Benvolio went with her; but before he went he paid a visit to his other mistress. He flattered himself that he had burned his ships behind him, but the fire was still visibly smouldering. It is true, nevertheless, that he passed a very strange half-hour with Scholastica and her father. The young girl had greatly changed; she barely greeted him; she looked at him coldly. He had no idea her face could wear that look; it vexed him to find it there. He had not been to see her in many weeks, and he now came to tell her that he was going away for a year: it is true these were not conciliatory facts. But she had taught him to think that she possessed in perfection the art of trustful resignation, of unprotesting, cheerful patience—virtues that sat so gracefully on her bended brow that the thought of their being at any rate supremely becoming took the edge from his remorse at making them necessary. But now Scholastica looked older,

as well as sadder, and decidedly not so pretty. Her figure was meagre, her movements angular, her complexion, even, not so pure as he had fancied. After the first minute he avoided her eye; it made her uncomfortable. Her voice she scarcely allowed him to hear. The Professor, as usual, was serene and frigid, impartial and transcendental. There was a chill in the air, a shadow between them. Benvolio went so far as to wonder that he had ever found a charm in the young girl, and his present disillusionment gave him even more anger than pain. He took leave abruptly and coldly, and puzzled his brain for a long time afterward over the mystery of Scholastica's reserve.

The Countess had said that travelling was a test of friendship; in this case friendship (or whatever the passion was to be called) bade fair for some time to resist the test. Benvolio passed six months of the liveliest felicity. The world has nothing better to offer to a man of sensibility than a first visit to Italy during those years of life when perception is at its keenest, when discretion has arrived, and yet youth has not departed. He made with the Countess a long, slow progress through the lovely land, from the Alps to the Sicilian Sea; and it seemed to him that his imagination, his intellect, his genius, expanded with every breath and ripened with every glance. The Countess was in an almost equal ecstasy, and their sympathy

was perfect in all points save the lady's somewhat indiscriminate predilection for assemblies and receptions. She had a thousand letters of introduction to deliver, and they entailed a vast deal of social exertion. Often, on balmy nights when he would have preferred to meditate among the ruins of the Forum, or to listen to the moonlit ripple of the Adriatic, Benvolio found himself dragged away to kiss the hand of a decayed princess, or to take a pinch from the snuff-box of an epicurean cardinal. But the cardinals, the princesses, the ruins, the warm southern tides which seemed the voice of history itself—these and a thousand other things resolved themselves into a vast pictorial spectacle—the very stuff that inspiration is made of. Everything he had written before coming to Italy now appeared to him worthless; this was the needful stamp, the consecration of talent. One day, however, this pure felicity was clouded; by a trifle you will say, possibly, but you must remember that in men of Benvolio's disposition primary impulses are almost always produced by trifles light as air. The Countess, speaking of the tone of voice of some one they had met, happened to say that it reminded her of the voice of that queer little woman at home—the daughter of the blind professor. Was this pure inadvertence, or was it malicious design? Benvolio never knew, though he immediately demanded of her, in sur-

prise, when and where she had heard Scholastica's voice. His whole attention was aroused; the Countess perceived it, and for a moment she hesitated. Then she bravely proclaimed that she had seen the young girl in the musty old book-room where she spent her dreary life. At these words, uttered in a profoundly mocking tone, Benvolio had an extraordinary sensation. He was walking with the Countess in the garden of a palace, and they had just approached the low balustrade of a terrace which commanded a magnificent view. On one side were violet Apenines, dotted here and there with a gleaming castle or convent; on the other stood the great palace through whose galleries the two had just been strolling, with its walls incrusted with medallions and its cornice charged with statues. But Benvolio's heart began to beat; the tears sprang to his eyes; the perfect landscape around him faded away and turned to nothing, and there rose before him, distinctly, vividly present, the old brown room that looked into the dull northern garden, tenanted by the quiet figures he had once told himself that he loved. He had a choking sensation and a sudden, overwhelming desire to return to his own country.

The Countess would say nothing more than that the fancy had taken her one day to go and see Scholastica. "I suppose I may go where I please!" she cried in the tone of the great lady who is accustomed

to believe that her glance confers honor wherever it falls. "I'm sure I did her no harm. She's a good little creature, and it's not her fault if she's so unfortunately plain." Benvolio looked at her intently, but he saw that he would learn nothing from her that she did not choose to tell. As he stood there he was amazed to find how natural or at least how easy it was to disbelieve her. She had been with the young girl: that accounted for anything; it accounted abundantly for Scholastica's painful constraint. What had the Countess said and done? what infernal trick had she played upon the poor girl's simplicity? He helplessly wondered, but he felt that she could be trusted to hit her mark. She had done him the honor to be jealous, and to alienate Scholastica she had invented some infernally plausible charge against himself. He felt sick and angry, and for a week he treated his companion with the coldest civility. The charm was broken, the cup of pleasure was drained. This remained no secret to the Countess, who was profoundly vexed at her own indiscretion. At last she abruptly told Benvolio that the test had failed; they must separate; he would please her by taking his leave. He asked no second permission, but bade her farewell in the midst of her little retinue, and went journeying out of Italy with no other company than his thick-swarming memories and projects.

The first thing he did on reaching home was to repair to the Professor's abode. The old man's chair, for the first time, was empty, and Scholastica was not in the room. He went out into the garden, where, after wandering hither and thither, he found the young girl seated on a secluded bench. She was dressed, as usual, in black; but her head was drooping, her empty hands were folded, and her face was sadder even than when he had last seen her. If she had been changed then, she was doubly changed now. Benvolio looked round, and as the Professor was nowhere visible, he immediately guessed the cause of her affliction. The good old man had gone to join his immortal brothers, the classic sages, and Scholastica was utterly alone. She seemed frightened at seeing him, but he took her hand, and she let him sit down beside her. "Whatever you were once told that made you think ill of me is detestably false," he said. "I have a boundless friendship for you, and now more than ever I should like to show it." She slowly gathered courage to meet his eyes; she found them reassuring, and at last, though she never told him in what way her mind had been poisoned, she suffered him to believe that her old confidence had come back. She told him how her father had died and how, in spite of the high philosophical maxims he had bequeathed to her for her consolation, she felt very lonely and helpless. Her uncle

had offered her a maintenance, meagre but sufficient; she had the old serving-woman to keep her company, and she meant to live where she was and occupy herself with collecting her father's papers and giving them to the world according to a plan for which he had left particular directions. She seemed irresistibly appealing and touching and yet full of secret dignity and self-support. Benvolio fell in love with her on the spot, and only abstained from telling her so because he remembered just in time that he had an engagement with the Countess which had not yet been formally rescinded. He paid her a long visit, and they went in together and rummaged over her father's books and papers. The old scholar's literary memoranda proved to be extremely valuable. It would be a great work and a most interesting enterprise to give them to the world. When Scholastica heard Benvolio's high estimate of them her cheek began to glow and her spirit to revive. The present then was secure, she seemed to say to herself, and she would have occupation for many a month. He offered to give her every assistance in his power, and in consequence he came daily to see her. Scholastica lived so much out of the world that she was not obliged to trouble herself about gossip. Whatever jests were aimed at the young man for his visible devotion to a mysterious charmer, he was very sure that her ear was never wounded by

base insinuations. The old serving-woman sat in a corner, nodding over her distaff, and the two friends held long confabulations over yellow manuscripts in which the commentary, it must be confessed, did not always adhere very closely to the text. Six months elapsed, and Benvolio found an ineffable charm in this mild mixture of sentiment and study. He had never in his life been so long of the same mind; it really seemed as if, as the phrase is, the fold was taken for ever, as if he had done with the world and were ready to live henceforth in the closet. He hardly thought of the Countess, and they had no correspondence. She was in Italy, in Greece, in the East, in the Holy Land, in places and situations that taxed the imagination.

One day, in the darkness of the vestibule, after he had left Scholastica, he was arrested by a little old man of sordid aspect, of whom he could make out hardly more than a pair of sharply-glowing little eyes and an immense bald head, polished like an ivory ball. He was a quite terrible little figure in his way, and Benvolio at first was frightened. "Mr. Poet," said the old man, "let me say a single word. I give my niece a maintenance. She may do what she likes. But she forfeits every stiver of her allowance and her expectations if she is fool enough to marry a fellow who scribbles rhymes. I'm told they are sometimes an hour finding two that will

match! Good evening, Mr. Poet!" Benvolio heard a sound like the faint jingle of loose coin in a trowsers pocket, and the old man abruptly retreated into his domiciliary gloom. Benvolio had never seen him before, and he had no wish ever to see him again. He had not proposed to himself to marry Scholastica, and even if he had, I am pretty sure he would now have taken the modest view of the matter, and decided that his hand and heart were an insufficient compensation for the forfeiture of a miser's fortune. The young girl never spoke of her uncle: he lived quite alone apparently, haunting his upper chambers like a restless ghost, and sending her, by the old serving-woman, her slender monthly allowance, wrapped up in a piece of old newspaper. It was shortly after this that the Countess at last came back. Benvolio had been taking one of his long customary walks, and passing through the park on his way home, he had sat down on a bench to rest. In a few moments a carriage came rolling by; in it sat the Countess—beautiful, sombre, solitary. He rose with a ceremonious salute, and she went her way. But in five minutes she passed back again, and this time her carriage stopped. She gave him a single glance, and he got in. For a week afterward Scholastica vainly awaited him. What had happened? It had happened that though she had proved herself both false and cruel, the Countess again asserted

her charm, and our precious hero again succumbed to it. But he resumed his visits to Scholastica after an interval of neglect not long enough to be unpardonable; the only difference was that now they were not so frequent.

My story draws to a close, for I am afraid you have already lost patience with our young man's eternal comings and goings. Another year ran its course, and the Professor's manuscripts were arranged in great piles, and almost ready for the printer. Benvolio had had a constant hand in the work, and had found it exceedingly interesting; it involved inquiries and researches of the most stimulating and profitable kind. Scholastica was very happy. Her friend was often absent for many days, during which she knew he was leading the great world's life; but she had learned that if she patiently waited, the pendulum would swing back and he would reappear and bury himself in their books and papers and talk. And it was not all work and no play between them either; they talked of everything that came into their heads, and Benvolio by no means forbade himself to descant on those things touching which this sacred vow of personal ignorance had been taken for his companion. He took her wholly into his poetic confidence, and read her everything he had written since his return from Italy. The more he worked the more he desired to work; and

so, at this time, occupied as he was with editing the Professor's manuscripts, he had never been so productive on his own account. He wrote another drama, on an Italian subject, which was performed with magnificent success; and this he had discussed with Scholastica scene by scene and speech by speech. He proposed to her to come and see it acted from a covered box, where her seclusion would be complete. She seemed for an instant to feel the force of the temptation; then she shook her head with a frank smile, and said it was better not. The play was dedicated to the Countess, who had suggested the subject to him in Italy, where it had been imparted to her, as a family anecdote, by one of her old princesses. This easy, fruitful double life might have lasted for ever but for two most regrettable events. *Might* have lasted I say; you observe I do not affirm it positively. Scholastica became preoccupied and depressed; she was suffering a secret annoyance. She concealed it as far as she might from her friend, and with some success; for although he suspected something and questioned her, she persuaded him that it was his own fancy. In reality it was no fancy at all, but the very uncomfortable fact that her shabby old uncle, the miser, was making himself excessively disagreeable to her. He had told Benvolio that she might do as pleased her, but he had recently revoked this amiable concession. He informed her

one day by means of an illegible note, scrawled with a blunt pencil, on the back of an old letter, that her beggarly friend the poet came to see her altogether too often; that he was determined she never should marry a crack-brained rhymester; and that before the sacrifice became too painful she would be so good as to dismiss Mr. Benvolio. This was accompanied by an intimation, more explicit than gracious, that he opened his money bags only for those who deferred to his incomparable wisdom. Scholastica was poor, and simple, and lonely: but she was proud, for all that, with a silent pride of her own, and her uncle's charity, proffered on these terms, became intolerably bitter to her soul. She sent him word that she thanked him for his past liberality, but she would no longer be a charge upon him. She said to herself that she could work; she had a superior education; many women, she knew, supported themselves. She even found something inspiring in the idea of going out into the world of which she knew so little, to seek her fortune. Her great desire, however, was to keep her situation a secret from Benvolio, and to prevent his knowing the sacrifice she was making for him. This it is especially that proves she was proud. It so befell that circumstances made secrecy possible. I don't know whether the Countess had always an idea of marrying Benvolio, but her unquenchable vanity still

suffered from the spectacle of his divided allegiance, and it suggested to her a truly malignant revenge. A brilliant political mission, for a particular purpose, was about to be despatched to a neighboring government, and half a dozen young men of eminence were to be attached to it. The Countess had influence at court, and without saying anything to Benvolio, she immediately urged his claim to a post, on the ground of his distinguished services to literature. She pulled her wires so cleverly that in a very short time she had the pleasure of presenting him his appointment, on a great sheet of parchment, from which the royal seal dangled by a blue ribbon. It involved an exile of but a few weeks, and to this, with her eye on the sequel of her project, she was able to resign herself. Benvolio's imagination took fire at the thought of spending a month at a foreign court, in the very hotbed of consummate diplomacy; this was a phase of experience with which he was as yet unacquainted. He departed, and no sooner had he gone than the Countess, at a venture, waited upon Scholastica. She knew she was poor, and she believed that in spite of her homely virtues she would not, if the opportunity was placed in a certain light, prove implacably indisposed to better her fortunes. She knew nothing of the young girl's contingent expectations from her uncle, and her interference, at this juncture, was simply a remark-

able coincidence. She laid before her a proposal from a certain great lady, whose husband, an eminent general, had just been dubbed governor of an island on the other side of the globe. This lady desired a preceptress for her children; she had heard of Scholastica's merit, and she ventured to hope that she might persuade her to accompany her to the antipodes and reside in her family. The offer was brilliant; to Scholastica it seemed mysteriously and providentially opportune. Nevertheless she hesitated, and demanded time for reflection; without telling herself why, she wished to wait till Benvolio returned. He wrote her two or three letters, full of the echoes of his actual life, and without a word about the things that were nearer her own experience. The month elapsed, but he was still absent. Scholastica, who was in correspondence with the governor's wife, delayed her decision from week to week. She had sold her father's manuscripts to a publisher, at a very poor bargain, and gone, meanwhile, to live in a convent. At last the governor's lady demanded her ultimatum. The poor girl scanned the horizon, and saw no rescuing friend; Benvolio was still at the court of Illyria! What she saw was the Countess's fine eyes eagerly watching her over the top of her fan. They seemed to contain a horrible menace, and to hold somehow her happiness at their mercy. Her heart sank; she

gathered up her few possessions and set sail, with her illustrious protectors, for the antipodes. Shortly after her departure Benvolio returned. He felt a terrible pang of rage and grief when he learned that she had gone; he went to the Countess, prepared to accuse her of the basest treachery. But she checked his reproaches by arts that she had never gone so far as to use before, and promised him that if he would trust her, he should never miss that pale-eyed little governess. It can hardly be supposed that he believed her, but he appears to have been guilty of letting himself be persuaded without belief. For some time after this he almost lived with the Countess. He had, with infinite pains, purchased from his neighbor, the miser, the right of occupancy of the late Professor's apartment. The repulsive old man, in spite of his aversion to rhymesters, had not resisted the financial argument, and seemed greatly amazed that a poet should have a dollar to spend. Scholastica had left all things in their old places, but Benvolio, for the present, never went into the room. He turned the key in the door, and kept it in his waistcoat pocket, where, while he was with the Countess, his fingers fumbled with it. Several months rolled by, and the Countess's promise was not verified. He missed Scholastica intensely, and missed her more as time elapsed. He began at last to go to the old room with the garden, and to try

to do some work there. He succeeded in a fashion, but it seemed dreary—doubly dreary when he reflected what it might have been. Suddenly he ceased to visit the Countess; a long time passed without her seeing him. She met him at another house, and had some remarkable words with him. She covered him with reproaches that were doubtless deserved, but he made her an answer that caused her to open her eyes and flush, and admit afterward that, for a clever woman, she had been a great fool. "Don't you see," he said—"can't you imagine that I cared for you only by contrast? You took the trouble to kill the contrast, and with it you killed everything else. For a constancy I prefer *this!*" And he tapped his poetic brow. He never saw the Countess again. I rather regret now that I said at the beginning of my story that it was not to be a fairy tale; otherwise I should be at liberty to say, with harmonious geniality, that if Benvolio missed Scholastica he missed the Countess also, and led an extremely fretful and unproductive life, until one day he sailed for the antipodes and brought Scholastica home. After this he began to produce again; only, many people said, his poetry had become dismally dull. But excuse me; I am writing as if this *were* a fairy tale!

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